

1732

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MAHABHARATA

(ABRIDGED)

ADI PARVA
AND
SABHA PARVA

BY

C. V. SRINIVASA RAO, M.A., C.I.E.

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Maha/Rao

BANGALORE CITY

PRINTED AT THE BANGALORE PRESS, MYSORE ROAD

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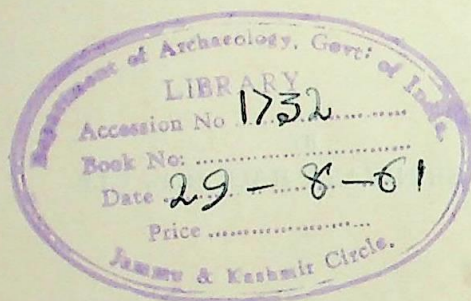
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PREFACE

This is an instalment of an attempt at condensing the Mahabharata within a reasonable compass by omitting episodes of minor importance or not having much bearing on the development of the story, by deleting passages or portions of passages or information of minor interest and generally by removing redundancies and repetitions to some extent. The story is told in the poet's own words as nearly as possible.

The Mahabharata which was written about two thousand five hundred years ago is the longest epic poem in the world, being seven times the Iliad and the Odyssey put together. It is not merely a story. It is also an encyclopædia of knowledge and a social history of the times. And in these days, few persons have the patience or the time to read the Sanskrit text or the translation in full. I am endeavouring to place the story before the average reader on a smaller canvas, but sufficiently large to admit the portrayal in some detail, in the poet's own words and according to his plan, of as much as possible of this unique epic.

This is largely based upon the late Babu Pratap Chandra Roy's full, close and valuable translation of the Mahabharata.

My thanks are due to Sri. B. Bhimasena Rao, B.Sc., of the Mysore Agricultural Department for helping me in checking with the Sanskrit text wherever necessary. I must also thank my daughter Srimati Savithri for helping me in reading the proofs and for suggesting improvements in language.

BANGALORE,
December 1956.

C. V. SRINIVASA RAO.

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THE MAHABHARATA

ADI PARVA

THE RISHI VYASA

Aum ! Having bowed down to Narayana and Nara, the most exalted of men, and also to the goddess Saraswati, must the word *Jaya** be uttered.

Ugrasrava, the son of Lomaharshana, surnamed Sauti, well-versed in the *Puranas*, one day approached, in all humility, the great sages of rigid vows who were attending the twelve years' sacrifice of Saunaka, surnamed Kulapati, in the Naimisha forest. After being welcomed with due respect by those holy men, he saluted those sages with joined palms, even all of them, and inquired about the progress of their asceticism. When he was comfortably seated and had recovered from fatigue, one of the *Rishis* opening the conversation asked him: "Whence comest thou, O Sauti, and where hast thou been? Tell me, who ask thee, in full."

Sauti said: "Having heard the diverse sacred and wonderful stories related by Krishna-Dwaipayana in his *Mahabharata* and which were recited in full by Vaisampayana at the Snake-sacrifice of the high-souled royal sage Janamejaya in the presence of that chief of Princes, the son of Parikshita, and having wandered about, visiting many sacred waters and holy shrines, I journeyed to the country venerated by the Dwijas (twice-born) and called Samantapanchaka, where formerly was fought the battle between the children of *Kuru* and *Pandu*, with all the chiefs of the land ranged on either side. Thence, wishing to see you, I am come into your presence. Ye reverend sages, all of whom are to me as Brahma; ye greatly blessed, who shine in this place of

* Another name for *Mahabharata*.

sacrifice with the splendour of the solar fire; ye who have concluded the silent meditations and have fed the holy fire; what, O ye Dwijas, shall I repeat? Shall I recount the sacred stories collected in the *Puranas* containing precepts of religious duty and of worldly profit, or the deeds of illustrious saints and sovereigns of mankind?"

The *Rishi* replied: "We are desirous of hearing that history, called *Bharata*, the holy composition of the wonderful Vyasa, which dispelleth the fear of evil, just as it was recited with such zest by the *Rishi* Vaisampayana, under the direction of Dwaipayana himself, at the Snake-sacrifice of Raja Janamejaya."

Sauti then said: "The son of Satyavati having, by penance and meditation, analysed the eternal Veda composed this holy history. And when that learned Brahmarshi of strict vows, the noble Dwaipayana Vyasa, offspring of Parasara, had finished this greatest of narrations, he began to consider how he might teach it to his disciples. Learning the anxiety of the *Rishi*, the possessor of the six attributes, Brahma, the world's preceptor, visited the *Rishi's* abode in order to gratify the saint and benefit the world. When Vyasa, along with the assemblage of *Munis*, saw him, he was surprised; and, standing with joined palms, he bowed and had a seat placed for him. Then reverentially going round Him who is called Hiranyagarbha, seated on that distinguished seat, Vyasa stood near it; and being commanded by Brahma Parameshti, he sat down near the seat, full of devotion and smiling in joy.

And, addressing Brahma Parameshti, he said: 'O divine Brahma, by me a poem hath been composed which is highly esteemed. The mystery of the Veda and other subjects have been explained by me; the various rituals of the Vedas and the Upanishads with the Angas; the *Puranas* and history compiled by me and named after the three divisions of time, past, present and future; the determination of the nature of decay, death, fear, disease, existence and non-existence; a description of creeds and the various modes of life; the

rules for the four castes, the import of all the *Puranas*; an account of asceticism and of the duties of a religious student; the dimensions of the sun, the moon, the planets, constellations and stars, together with the length of the four ages; the Rik, Sama and Yajur Vedas, also the Adhyatma; the sciences called Nyaya, Orthoepy and Medicine; charity and Pasupata; birth, celestial and human, for particular purposes; also a description of places of pilgrimage and other holy places; of rivers, mountains, forests and the ocean; of heavenly cities and the *kalpas*; the art of war; the several nations, their language and manners; and the all-pervading spirit; all these have been represented. But, unfortunately, none can be found on this earth who can transcribe this work.'

Brahma said: 'I esteem thee for thy knowledge of divine mysteries. I know thou hast truly revealed the divine Word, even from its first utterance. Let Ganesa be thought of, O *Muni*, for the purpose of writing the poem.'

Sauti said: 'Then Vyasa meditated on Ganesa. And Ganesa, that obviator of obstacles, ever ready to fulfil the desires of his votaries, was no sooner thought of than he repaired to the place where Vyasa was seated. After he had been welcomed and was seated, Vyasa addressed him thus: 'O guide of the *Ganas*! be thou the writer of the *Bharata* which I have formed in my mind and which I am about to relate.'

Ganesa answered: 'I shall agree to be the writer of thy work provided my pen does not for a moment cease writing.' And Vyasa said unto that divinity: 'Whenever there be anything thou dost not comprehend, stop writing.' Ganesa having signified his assent by repeating the word 'Aum' proceeded to write.

And Vyasa began. Occasionally, he would knit the knots of composition exceeding close (compelling Ganesa to pause for a while in order to understand the meaning); by which device he succeeded in dictating this work as stipulated.

Sauti continued: "Vyasa composed the *Bharata*, exclusive of the episodes, originally in twenty-four thousand verses. Then he made another compilation consisting of six hundred thousand verses of which one hundred thousand only are known in the regions of mankind; and they were recited by Vaisampayana, one of the disciples of Vyasa. Know that I, Sauti, have also repeated those one hundred thousand verses.

In former days, the four Vedas and the *Bharata* were once weighed in the balance against each other by the celestials assembled for that purpose. As the latter was found heavier than the four Vedas with their mysteries, it hath from that time been called in the world *Mahabharata* (the *great Bharata*); being esteemed superior both in substance and gravity of import."

UTANKA'S GRIEVANCE

Sauti said: "There was a *Rishi* by the name of Ayodha-Dhaumya. He had three disciples, Upamanyu, Aruni and Veda. Having received the permission of his preceptor to leave on the completion of his studies, Veda entered on the duties of a householder. He took three pupils, but he never set them any (impossible) tasks or expected them to obey implicitly his own behests; for, having suffered much hardship himself while living with the family of his preceptor, he liked not to treat them with severity.

And one day, being called away upon some business relating to a sacrifice, he asked one of his disciples, Utanka, to look after his household. 'Utanka,' said he, 'whatsoever has to be done in my house (during my absence), let it be done by thee without neglect.'

After sometime he returned from his journey, and learning all that had happened in his absence he was very pleased; and addressing Utanka he said: 'Utanka, my child, what favour shall I bestow on thee? I have been served by thee duly; therefore hath our attachment for each other increased.

I grant thee leave to depart. Go thou, and let thy wishes be fulfilled.'

Utanka replied: 'Allow me, Sir, to offer as gift something that you may wish to have; for it hath been said: He who bestoweth instruction contrary to usage (that is, accepteth not fees therefor) and he who receiveth it contrary to usage (that is, offereth not fees therefor), one of the two dieth, and enmity springeth up between the two. I am, therefore, desirous of bringing thee the gratuity due to a preceptor.' His master, upon hearing this, replied: 'Utanka, my child, wait a while.' After sometime, Utanka reminded: 'I await thy commands as to the gratuity thou wishest me to bring.' And his preceptor then said: 'My dear Utanka, thou hast often told me that you wish to give something in return for the instruction thou hast received. Go in then and ask thy mistress what thou art to bring as gratuity. And bring thou what she wants.' Thus directed by his preceptor Utanka approached his preceptress and said: 'Madam, I have obtained my master's leave to go home, and I wish to bring something agreeable to thee by way of gratuity for the instruction I have received, so that I may not depart as his debtor. Therefore, may I know what thou wouldst have me bring thee as gratuity.' His preceptress replied: 'Go unto King Paushya and beg of him the pair of ear-rings worn by his Queen, and bring them hither. On the fourth day from now which is a sacred day I wish to appear before the Brahmanas (who may dine at my house) decked with these ear-rings. Then, accomplish this, Utanka. If thou shouldst succeed, good fortune shall attend thee; if not, what good canst thou expect?'

Utanka then took his departure. On his way he saw a bull of extraordinary size and a man of uncommon stature mounted thereon. And that man said: 'Eat thou of the dung of this bull.' Utanka, however, was unwilling to comply. The man repeated: 'Utanka, eat of it without question. Thy master ate of it before.' Utanka signified his assent, ate of the dung and drank of the urine of that bull,

rose respectfully, and washing his hands and mouth proceeded on his quest.

On reaching his destination, Utanka saw Paushya seated on his throne; and approaching the monarch he greeted him by pronouncing blessings and said: 'I am come as a suppliant to thee.' King Paushya, having returned Utanka's salutations, said: 'Sir, what can I do for thee?' And Utanka said 'I am come to beg of thee a pair of ear-rings as gratuity for my preceptor. It behoveth thee to give me the ear-rings worn by thy Queen.'

King Paushya replied: 'Go, Utanka, into the female apartments where the Queen is and ask for them.' Utanka went into the women's apartments, but the Queen was not to be found there. (Somewhat annoyed) he again approached the King and said, 'It is not meet that I should be fooled by thee. Thy Queen is not in the private apartments, for I could not find her.' The King pondered for a while and replied: 'Recollect, Sir, carefully whether thou art not in a state of pollution in consequence of contact with the impurities of a repast. My Queen is a chaste wife and cannot be seen by any one who is impure owing to contact with the leavings of a repast.'

Utanka reflected for a moment and then said: 'Yes, it must be so. Having been in a hurry I performed my ablutions after meals in a standing posture.' King Paushya then said: 'Here is a transgression. Purification is not properly done by one in a standing posture, nor by one while he is going along.' Utanka then sat down with his face towards the east and having washed his face, hands and feet thoroughly he once more entered the women's apartments. This time he saw the Queen who greeted him respectfully and said: 'Welcome Sir, what are thy commands?' Utanka said unto her: 'It behoveth thee to give me those ear-rings of thine. I beg them as a present for my preceptor.' And the Queen who was highly pleased with Utanka's conduct, considering that Utanka was a fit object of charity, took off her ear-rings and giving them to him said: 'These ear-rings are very much

sought after by Takshaka, the King of the Serpents. Thou must therefore carry them with the greatest care.'

On the homeward journey Utanka noticed a naked idle beggar in the road coming towards him, sometimes visible and sometimes not. And Utanka had occasion to put the ear-rings on the ground and to go in search of water. In the meantime the beggar came quickly to the spot and ran away with the ear-rings. After completing his ablutions and bowing down reverently to the gods and his spiritual masters, Utanka pursued the thief with the utmost speed. Overtaking him with great difficulty, he caught hold of him. But the person seized immediately changed from the form of a beggar and, assuming his real form, viz., that of Takshaka, quickly entered a large hole in the ground and proceeded to his own abode, the region of the serpents.

Utanka recollected the words of the Queen and began to open the hole with a stick, but could not make much progress. And Indra beholding his distress sent his thunderbolt (Vajra) to his assistance. The thunderbolt entering that stick enlarged that hole and, getting in, Utanka beheld the region of the serpents, infinite in extent, filled with hundreds of palaces and elegant mansions with turrets, domes and gateways. He then glorified the serpents.

But when he saw that he obtained not the ear-rings even though he had adored the serpents, he looked round and beheld two women before a loom weaving a piece of cloth with a fine shuttle; and in the loom were black and white threads. He likewise saw a wheel with twelve spokes turned by six boys, and he also saw a man with a handsome horse. And he addressed them the following *mantras*:—

'These damsels representing universal nature are weaving without intermission a cloth with threads black and white, and thereby ushering into existence the manifold worlds and the beings that inhabit them. Thou wielder of the thunder, the protector of the universe, the slayer of Vitra and Namuchi, thou illustrious one who wearest the black cloth and displayest truth and untruth in the universe, thou who ownest, for thy

carrier, the horse that came from the depths of the ocean and which is but another form of Agni (the god of fire), I bow to thee, thou supreme Lord, thou Lord of the three worlds, O Purandara !'

Then the man with the horse said unto Utanka: 'I am gratified by thy adoration. What can I do for thee?' Utanka replied: 'Even let the serpents be brought under my control.' And the man said: 'Blow into this horse.' Utanka blew into that horse and there issued, from every aperture of its body, flames of fire with smoke by which the region of the Nagas was about to be consumed. Surprised beyond measure and terrified by the heat of the fire, Takshaka immediately came out of his abode bringing the ear-rings with him and said unto Utanka: 'Pray, Sir, take back the ear-rings.'

Having recovered his ear-rings Utanka thought, 'To-day is the appointed sacred day of my preceptress. I am so far away. How can I, therefore, comply with her request?' As he was getting anxious about this, the man with the horse spoke to him and said: 'Ride this horse, Utanka, and he will take thee in a moment to thy master's abode.' Utanka mounted the horse and presently reached his preceptor's house. Entering his preceptor's abode he paid his respects to his preceptress and presented her the ear-rings. 'Utanka,' said she, 'thou hast arrived here in time. Welcome, my child. Good fortune is even before thee. Let thy wishes be crowned with success.'

Then Utanka waited on his preceptor who said: 'Thou art welcome. What hath occasioned thy long absence?' And Utanka replied: 'Sir, in the execution of my business obstruction was offered by Takshaka, the King of Serpents. I had therefore to go to the region of the Nagas where I saw two damsels, weaving a fabric with black and white threads. Pray, what is that? Likewise, I beheld there a wheel with twelve spokes ceaselessly turned by six boys. What too doth that mean? Who also is the man that I saw? And what the horse of extraordinary size likewise

beheld by me? And when I was on the road I also saw a bull with a man mounted thereon, by whom I was endearingly accosted thus 'Utanka, eat of the dung of this bull, which was also eaten by thy master.' So I ate of the dung of that bull. Who also is he?'

And his preceptor answered: 'The two damsels thou hast seen are *Dhata* and *Vidhata*; the black and white threads denote night and day; and the wheel of twelve spokes turned by the six boys signifieth the year comprising six seasons. The man is *Parjanya*, the deity of rain; and the horse is *Agni*, the god of fire. The bull that thou hast seen on the road is *Airavata*, the king of elephants; the man mounted thereon is *Indra*; and the dung of the bull which was eaten by thee was *Amrita*. It was certainly due to this nectar which thou ate that thou didst not meet with death in the region of the *Nagas*; and *Indra* who is my friend, having been mercifully inclined, showed thee favour. That is why thou returnest safely with the ear-rings. O thou amiable one, I now give thee leave to depart. May thou have good fortune.'

Resolving to avenge himself on *Takshaka*, *Utanka* then proceeded towards *Hastinapura* and waited upon King *Janamejaya* who had recently returned victorious from *Takshashila*. After pronouncing benedictions on him *Utanka* said to the monarch: 'O thou best of monarchs! How is it that thou spendest thy time like a child when there is a matter that urgently demandeth thy attention?'

Sauti said: "The monarch *Janamejaya* saluting that excellent *Brahmana* replied: 'In cherishing these my subjects I do discharge the duties of my noble tribe. Pray, what is the business that needeth my attention and which hath brought thee hither?'

That foremost of *Brahmanas* answered: 'O thou King of kings, thy father was deprived of life by *Takshaka*; therefore do thou avenge thy father's death. The time hath come for the act of vengeance ordained by the Fates. Go then and avenge the death of thy magnanimous father who was bitten by that vile serpent though he had done him no

harm and was reduced to the five elements even like a tree stricken by thunder. Wicked in his deeds, he even caused Kasyapa (the prince of physicians) to go back when he was coming for the relief of thy father. It behoveth thee to burn the wicked wretch in the blazing fire of a *Snake-sacrifice*. O King, give instant orders for the sacrifice. And a very great favour shall have also been shown to me. For, by that malignant wretch, O virtuous Prince, my business also was, on one occasion, obstructed.'

Sauti continued: "Hearing these words the monarch was enraged with Takshaka. As the sacrificial fire blazes forth when libations of clarified butter are poured over it, even so was the prince's wrath kindled by Utanka's speech. And moved also by grief, the prince asked his ministers, in the presence of Utanka himself, for the particulars of his father's journey to the regions of the blessed."

PARIKSHIT DIES OF SNAKE-BITE

Then, with joined hands, Ugrasrava Sauti addressed the *Rishis* thus: "I have told ye the story of Utanka which is one of the causes of King Janamejaya's Snake-sacrifice. What, reverend Sirs, do ye wish to hear now? What shall I relate to ye?"

The holy men replied, "O son of Lomaharshana, our reverend master, Saunaka, is at the moment busy in the apartment of the holy fire. It behoves us therefore to wait for him. And when he is free, thou wilt answer what that best of Dwijas shall ask of thee."

Sauti said: "Be it so."

And when Saunaka came and took his seat in the midst of the *Ritwiks* and *Sadasyas* he spake as followeth:—

Saunaka said: "For what reason did that tiger among kings, the royal Janamejaya, determine to take the lives of the snakes? O Sauti, tell us in full the true story."

Sauti said: "Once upon a time, there was a king of the Kuru race by the name of Parikshit. Like his great-grandfather Pandu of old, he was of mighty arms, the first of all

bearers of bows in battle, and was fond of hunting. And the monarch wandered about, slaying deer, wild boars, wolves, buffaloes and other wild animals. One day, having pierced a deer with a sharp arrow and slung his bow on his back, he penetrated into the deep forest, searching for the animal everywhere, like the illustrious Rudra himself of old pursuing in the heavens, bow in hand, the deer pierced by him which was indeed Sacrifice itself in the form of an animal. Fatigued and thirsty, he chanced to meet a *Muni* (sage) in the forest, seated in a cow-pen and drinking to his fill the froth oozing out of the mouths of calves sucking the milk of their dams. Approaching him quickly, the monarch asked that *Muni* of rigid vows: 'O Brahmana, I am King Parikshit, the son of Abhimanyu. A deer pierced by me hath been lost. Hast thou seen it?' But that *Muni*, observing then the vow of silence, spake not a word. And the king in anger picked up a dead snake with the end of his bow and placed it upon his shoulder. The *Muni* suffered him to do so without protest. He spake not a word, good or bad. Seeing him thus unmoved, the king's anger ceased and he felt sorry. He then returned to his capital, but the *Rishi* remained in the same state. The forgiving *Muni*, knowing that the monarch who was a tiger amongst kings was true to the duties of his order, cursed him not, though insulted. And that foremost one of Bharata's race also knew not that the Brahmana was a virtuous *Rishi*.

That *Rishi* had a son by name *Sringin*, of tender years, gifted with great energy, deep in ascetic penances, severe in his vows, very wrathful, and difficult to be appeased.

Hearing that a dead snake had been placed upon his father's shoulder, he turned red with anger. Overcome with wrath the puissant *Rishi* then cursed the king.

Sringin said: 'That sinful wretch of a monarch who hath placed a dead snake on the shoulder of my lean and old parent, that insulter of Brahmanas and tarnisher of the fame of the Kurus, shall within seven nights be taken to the

regions of Yama by the snake Takshaka, the powerful king of serpents.'

Sauti continued: 'And having thus cursed in anger, Sringin went to see his father and found the sage sitting in the cow-pen, bearing the dead snake. He shed tears of grief and spoke to his sire: 'Father, learning of this thy disgrace at the hands of that wicked wretch, King Parikshit, I have from anger even cursed him; and that worst of Kurus hath, richly deserved my potent curse. Seven days hence, Takshaka, the lord of snakes, shall take the sinful king to the dreadful abode of Death.' And the father said to the enraged son: 'Child, I am not pleased with thee. Ascetics should not act thus. We live in the domains of that great king. We are protected by him righteously. In all he does, the reigning king should by the like of us be forgiven. If thou destroyest Dharma, verily Dharma will destroy thee. If the king does not properly protect us, we cannot perform our religious rites unmolested. Protected by righteous sovereigns, we acquire immense merit, and they are entitled to a share thereof. Therefore, the ruler is by all means to be forgiven. And Parikshit, like unto his great-grandsire, protecteth us as a king should protect his subjects. A kingless country always suffereth from evils. The king punisheth offenders, and fear of punishments conduceth to peace; and the people attend to their duties and perform their rites undisturbed. The king cherisheth righteousness; and righteousness establisheth the kingdom of God. The king protecteth sacrifices, and sacrifices please the gods. The gods cause rain, and rain produceth crops needed so much by mankind. Manu sayeth: A ruler of the destinies of men is equal to ten *Veda*-studying priests. Fatigued and oppressed with hunger, that penance-practising prince hath done this in ignorance of my vow. Wherefore hast thou rashly done this unrighteous and childish deed?'

Sauti said: "And Sringin then replied to his father: 'Whether this be an act of rashness, father, or an improper

act, whether thou likest it or dislikest it, the words spoken by me shall never be futile.'

And Samika said: 'Dear child, I know that thou art of great prowess and truthful in speech; and thy curse will never be falsified. The son, even when he is of age, yet needeth the counsel of the father, so that crowned with good qualities he may win great renown. And, child as thou art, how much more must thou stand in need of counsel? Live thou, son, inclined to peace, eating fruits and roots of the forest. Kill thy ire and destroy not the fruits of thy asceticism. Wrath surely diminisheth the virtue that ascetics acquire with great pains; and for those deprived of virtue the blessed state existeth not. By forgiveness shalt thou obtain worlds that are beyond the reach of Brahman himself. Being peaceful myself and desirous as I am of doing as much good as lies in my power, I must now do something; I shall send word to that king, telling him, 'O monarch, thou hast been cursed by my son of tender years and immature intellect for thy act of disrespect towards me.'

Sauti continued: And that great ascetic accordingly sent with proper instructions a disciple of his (Gaurmukha by name) to King Parikshit.'

The twice-born Gaurmukha was worshipped by the monarch with due ceremonies; and after resting for a while, he communicated to the king, in the presence of his ministers, the words of Samika, of cruel import, exactly as he had been instructed.

And Gaurmukha said: 'O King of kings, there is a *Rishi*, Samika by name, of virtuous soul, with passions under control, peaceful, and engaged in hard ascetic devotions, living in thy dominions. By thee was placed on the shoulders of that *Rishi*, observing at present the vow of silence, a dead snake. He himself forgave thee that act. But his son could not. And by the latter hast thou to-day been cursed, without the knowledge of his father, to the effect that within seven nights hence Takshaka be the death of thee. Samika

urged his son to absolve thee, and, because he hath been unable to pacify his son, I have been sent to thee for thy good.'

And that king of the Kuru race, himself devoted to ascetic practice, hearing these cruel words and recollecting his own sinful act, became exceedingly sorry. Learning that that foremost of *Rishis* had been observing the vow of silence he was doubly grieved; and contrasting the kindness of the *Rishi* with his own misbehaviour towards him, the king felt very repentant. And the king, looking like a very god, grieved not so much on account of the news of his impending death as for his misconduct towards the *Rishi*.

Then he dismissed Gaurmukha, saying: 'Let the worshipful one (Samika) be gracious to me.' And when Gaurmukha had left, the king, in great anxiety and without loss of time, consulted his ministers. Wise in counsel himself, the king caused a mansion to be erected upon a solitary column. It was well-guarded day and night; and physicians with medicine and Brahmanas skilled in *mantras* were ever in attendance. Thus protected on all sides, the monarch discharged his kingly duties from that place.

On the fateful seventh day, the learned Kasyapa was proceeding towards the king's residence with the object of treating the king after the snake-bite. He had heard all that had happened and he thought: 'I shall cure the monarch when he is bit by that first of snakes. By doing so I may secure wealth and may also acquire merit.' But Takshaka, in the form of an old Brahmana, met Kasyapa and spake unto that bull amongst *Munis*, 'Whither dost thou go with such speed? What, besides, is the business upon which thou art intent?'

And Kasyapa replied: 'Takshaka will to-day burn King Parikshit of the Kuru race with his poison. I am hurrying to him in order to cure that king of immeasurable prowess, the sole representative of the Pandava race, after he is bit by the same Takshaka like to Agni himself in energy.' And Takshaka said: 'I am that Takshaka, Brahmana, who shall burn that lord of the earth. Stop, for thou art unable to

cure one-bit by me.' And Kasyapa rejoined: 'I am certain that, possessed as I am of the power of learning, going thither I shall cure that monarch though bit by thee.'

And Takshaka answered: 'If, indeed, thou art able to cure any creature bitten by me, then, Kasyapa, revive thou this tree bit by me. I shall burn this banian in thy sight. Try thy best and show me that skill in *mantras* of which thou hast spoken.'

And Kasyapa said: 'If thou art so minded, bite thou then this tree, O king of snakes. I shall revive it.'

Sauti continued: 'That king of snakes then bit that banian tree and spake again unto Kasyapa: 'O first of Brahmanas, try thy best and revive this lord of the forest.'

The tree had been reduced to ashes by the poison of that king of snakes. But, taking up the ashes, Kasyapa spoke these words: 'O king of snakes, behold the power of my knowledge as applied to this lord of the forest! In thy very presence I shall revive it.' And then the illustrious and learned Kasyapa revived that tree which had been reduced to a heap of ashes. First he created the sprout, then he furnished it with two leaves, then the stem, then the branches, and finally the full-grown tree with leaves and all. Seeing the tree revived by the illustrious Kasyapa, Takshaka said unto him: 'The reward thou hopest to get from that best of monarchs, even I will give thee. Reputed as thou art, thy success may be doubtful on that king suffering under a Brahmana's curse shortening life itself. This blazing fame of thine that hath spread over the three worlds will then disappear like the Sun when deprived of his splendour (during an eclipse).'

Kasyapa, hearing those words of Takshaka meditated for a while. Gifted with spiritual knowledge and ascertaining that the period of life of that king of the Pandava race had really run out, Kasyapa returned, receiving from Takshaka as much wealth as he desired.

Then Takshaka, at the proper time, speedily entered the city of Hastinapura. On his way he had heard that the king

was well protected and had also provided himself with poison-neutralising *mantras* and medicines. The snake thereupon reflected: 'I must deceive the monarch by my powers of illusion. But how?' Then Takshaka decided to send to the king some snakes in the guise of ascetics taking with them fruits, *kusa* grass, and water as presents. He said unto them: 'Go ye all to the king unperturbed, alleging business, and offer for the monarch's acceptance the fruits, flowers and water that ye shall carry as presents for him.'

Sauti continued: "Those snakes, thus commanded by Takshaka, took to the king *Kusa* grass, water and fruits, and that foremost of kings accepted the gifts. When those snakes disguised as ascetics left him, the king said to his ministers and friends: 'Eat ye, with me, these delicious fruits brought by the ascetics.' Impelled by Fate and the curse of the *Rishi*, the king and his ministers were tempted into eating those fruits. It so happened that the particular fruit in which Takshaka had concealed himself was picked out by the king for himself. When he was eating it, an ugly insect came out of the fruit, of shape scarcely discernible, with black eyes and coppery in colour. And that foremost of kings, holding that insect, said to his councillors: 'The sun is now setting; to-day I need therefore have no more fear of poison. Let this insect be Takshaka and bite me, so that my sinful act may be expiated and the words of the ascetic rendered true'. And he quickly placed that insect on his neck. And, as the king was smiling, Takshaka, who had (in the form of that insect) come out of the fruit coiled himself round the neck of the monarch and, uttering a tremendous roar, bit that protector of the earth.

The mansion of the king blazed up with Takshaka's poison. The king's councillors, on beholding it, fled away in all directions; and the king himself fell down, as if struck by lightning.

When the king was laid low by Takshaka's poison, his councillors and the royal priest—a holy Brahmana—performed his last rites. The citizens, assembling together,

proclaimed the minor son of the deceased monarch as their king and gave him the name of Janamejaya. Assisted by his councillors and priest, he ruled the kingdom even as his heroic great-grandfather Yudhishtira had done before."

JANAMEJAYA'S SNAKE-SACRIFICE

Sauti continued: "King Janamejaya, having listened to the account given by his ministers, was deeply moved. After reflecting for a moment, the angry monarch said to his ministers as follows:—

'I have heard your account of my father's ascension to heaven. Know ye now what my fixed resolve is. I feel that no time must be lost in avenging this injury upon the wretch Takshaka. He burnt my father making Sringin only the secondary cause. From sheer malignity he induced Kasyapa to return. If that Brahmana had arrived, my father assuredly would have lived. I must now avenge my self on my father's enemy to please myself, the *Rishi* Utanka and you all.'

His ministers having signified their approbation, the monarch summoned his priest and the *Ritwiks* and spake unto them: 'Tell me what I must do. Do ye know of any means by which I may cast the snake Takshaka into the blazing fire with all his relatives? I desire to burn that wretch even as he burnt my father of yore.'

The chief priest answered: 'There is, O king, a great sacrifice for thee devised by the gods themselves. It is known as the Snake-sacrifice and is related in the *Purana*. Thou alone art competent to perform it and no one else.'

Sauti continued: "Hearing this, the king thought that Takshaka was as good as burnt and thrown already into the blazing mouth of Agni, the eater of the sacrificial butter. He then said unto those Brahmanas versed in *mantras*: 'I shall make preparations for that sacrifice. Tell me what things are necessary.' And the king's *Ritwiks*, versed in the *Vedas* and acquainted with the rites of that sacrifice, measured, according to the scriptures, the land for the sacrificial platform. After the sacrificial platform had been constructed

according to rule they installed the king at the Snake-sacrifice. Before the commencement of the sacrifice, however, there occurred a very significant incident foreboding obstruction to the sacrifice. For, when the sacrificial platform was being constructed, a professional builder of great intelligence and well-versed in the lore of laying foundations, a *Suta* by caste, well acquainted with the *Puranas*, said: 'The soil upon which and the time at which the measurement for the sacrificial platform has been made indicate that this sacrifice will not be completed, a Brahmana being the cause thereof.' Hearing this, the king gave orders to his gate-keepers not to admit anyone without his knowledge.'

The Snake-sacrifice then commenced according to due form. And the sacrificial priests, clad in black garments and their eyes red from contact with smoke, poured clarified butter into the blazing fire, uttering proper *mantras* and the names of the snakes. Thereupon the snakes began to fall into the blazing fire, benumbed and piteously calling upon one another. The white, the black, the blue, the old and the young, all fell alike into the fire, uttering various cries. Hundreds of thousands of snakes, deprived of all control over their limbs, perished on that occasion.

Meanwhile, Takshaka, that prince of snakes, as soon as he heard that King Janamejaya had undertaken the sacrifice, went to the palace of Purandara. And that best of snakes, having represented all that had taken place, sought in terror the protection of Indra after having acknowledged his fault. And Indra told him: 'O Takshaka, here thou needst have no fear from that Snake-sacrifice. The Grandsire has been pacified by me on thy behalf.'

Thus assured by him, that best of snakes lived happily in Sakra's abode. But Vasuki, seeing that the snakes were steadily falling into the fire and that his family was reduced to only a few, became sorely grieved. Summoning his sister, he spake unto her: 'O amiable one, my limbs are burning and I no longer see the points of the heavens ! I am about to fall down from loss of consciousness. Benumbed

I may fall to-day into that blazing fire. This sacrifice of the son of Parikshit is for the extermination of our race. It is evident I shall also have to go to the abode of the king of the dead. But Astika can put an end to the sacrifice that is going on. The Grandsire himself told me this of old. Therefore, solicit thy dear son who is fully conversant with the *Vedas* and regarded even by the old to protect me and those dependent on me."

ASTIKA INTERVENES

Sauti said: "Then the snake-dame Jaratkaru calling her son told him: 'Son, the time is come for the accomplishment of the object for which I was bestowed on thy father by my brother.'

And Astika replied: 'Yea, I will.' Then turning to the afflicted Vasuki, he said: 'Vasuki, thou best of snakes, truly do I say I shall relieve thee from that curse. Be easy. Uncle, going thither to-day I shall gratify, with words mixed with blessings, the monarch Janamejaya so that the sacrifice may stop.'

Then that best of Brahmanas wended with speed to Janamejaya's sacrifice, but he was denied admittance by the door-keepers. The mighty ascetic, however, gratified them, and entering the magnificent sacrificial grounds began to propitiate the king, the *Ritwiks*, the *Sadasyas*, and also the sacred fire.

Astika said: 'Soma, Varuna and Prajapati performed sacrifices of old in Prayaga. Thy sacrifice, O foremost one of Bharata's race, O son of Parikshit, is not inferior to any of those. Let those dear unto us be blessed. Sakra performed a hundred sacrifices. But this sacrifice of thine is fully equal to ten thousand sacrifices of Sakra. Let those dear unto us be blessed. Like the sacrifice of King Yudhis-thira, the son of a god and belonging to Ajamida race, noised even in the heavens is this sacrifice of thine, O foremost one of Bharata's race, O son of Parikshit; let those dear unto

us be blessed. Like the sacrifice of Krishna-Dwaipayana, the son of Satyawati, in which he himself was the chief priest is this sacrifice of thine, O foremost one of Bharata's race, O son of Parikshit; let those dear unto us be blessed. These *Ritwiks* and *Sadasyas* that are officiating at thy sacrifice, like unto that of the slayer of Vritra, are of splendour equal to that of the sun. In this world of men there is no monarch equal to thee in protecting his subjects. I am ever well pleased with thy abstinence. Indeed, thou art either Varuna or Yama, the god of Justice. Like Sakra himself, thunderbolt in hand, thou art the protector of all creatures. There is none on earth so great as thou, and no monarch thy equal in sacrifice. In prowess thou art like Yayati and Mandhatri; in splendour equal to the sun; and, O monarch, like Bhishma thou art of excellent vows. Like Valmiki thou art of energy concealed and like Vasishtha thou hast controlled thy wrath. Like that of Indra is thy sovereignty. Thy splendour also shines like that of Narayana. Thou art like Krishna graced with every virtue. Like Rama (the son of Jamadagni) thou art versed in the scriptures and accomplished in arms. Thou inspirest terror by thy looks like Bhagiratha.'

Sauti said: "Astika, having thus adored them, gratified them all—the king, the *Sadasyas*, the *Ritwiks* and the sacrificial fire. And King Janamejaya observing the satisfaction manifested all around addressed them as follows.

"Janamejaya said: 'Though this one is but a boy, he speaks yet like a wise old man. I am inclined to confer a boon on him. Therefore, ye Brahmanas, give me leave.'

"The *Sadasyas* said: 'A Brahmana, though a boy, deserves the respect of kings; and more so if he is learned. This boy deserves to have every wish of his gratified by thee, but not before Takshaka comes with speed.'

Sauti continued: "The king then said unto the Brahmana: 'Ask thou a boon.' The Hotri, however, being rather displeased repeated: 'Takshaka hath not yet come.'

Janamejaya replied: "Exert ye to the best of your might, so that this sacrifice of mine may be completed and that Takshaka also may soon be here. He is my enemy."

"The *Ritwiks* replied: 'As the scriptures declare unto us, and as the fire also saith, O monarch, it seems that Takshaka has now in great fear taken shelter in the abode of Indra.'

Sauti continued: "The illustrious *Suta* named Lohitaksha also, conversant with the *Puranas*, had said so before. Asked by the king on the present occasion he again told the monarch: 'Sire, it is even as the Brahmanas have said. Knowing the *Puranas*, I say, O monarch, that Indra hath granted him this boon, saying: 'Dwell with me in concealment, and Agni shall not burn thee.'

Hearing this, the king was much upset and urged the Hotri to do his duty. And as the Hotri, chanting *mantras*, began to pour clarified butter into the fire, Indra himself appeared on the scene. And Takshaka, full of fear and feeling miserable, hid himself in the upper garment of Indra. The king in anger again said unto his *mantra*-knowing Brahmanas these words: 'If the snake Takshaka be in the abode of Indra, cast him into the fire with Indra himself.'

Urged thus by the king, the Hotri poured libations, naming that snake. And, as the libations were poured, Takshaka, with Purandara himself, anxious and grieved, became visible in a moment in the skies. And Purandara, viewing the sacrifice, was much alarmed. Quickly shaking Takshaka off he wended back to his own abode. And Takshaka, overcome with fear, was, by virtue of the *mantras*, brought near enough to the flames of the sacrificial fire.

The *Ritwiks* then said: 'O king of kings, this sacrifice of thine is being performed duly. It behoveth thee to grant a boon now to this first of Brahmanas.'

Janamejaya then said: 'Thou immeasurable one, I wish to grant thee that hath such handsome and child-like features a worthy boon. Ask thou that which thy heart

desireth. I promise thee that I will grant it even if it be impossible.'

Sauti continued: "While Takshaka was about to fall into the sacrificial fire, Astika spoke in those few moments as follows: 'O Janamejaya, if thou wouldst grant me a boon, let this sacrifice of thine be terminated and let no more snakes fall into the fire.'

Hearing this the son of Parikshit said: 'O illustrious one, gold, silver, kine, and indeed anything else thou desirest I shall give unto thee. But let not my sacrifice come to an end.'

Astika thereupon replied: 'Gold, silver or kine, I do not ask of thee, O monarch; but let thy sacrifice be ended so that my maternal relations be relieved.'

The son of Parikshit, being thus addressed by Astika, pleaded: 'Best of Brahmanas, ask for some other boon. O blest be thou.' But, he did not beg any other boon. Then all the *Sadasyas* learned in the *Vedas* said in one voice: 'Let the Brahmana receive his boon.'

Pressed by his *Sadasyas*, the king at last said: 'Let it be as Astika hath said. Let the sacrifice be ended; let the snakes be safe, and let this Astika also be gratified.' When the boon was granted to Astika plaudits expressive of joy rang through the air. And that sacrifice of the son of Parikshit came to an end."

VAISAMPAYANA'S NARRATION BEGINS

Saunaka said: "That sacred history called the *Mahabharata*, celebrating the glory of the Pandavas, which Krishna-Dwaipayana, asked by Janamejaya, caused to be duly recited after the completion of the sacrifice, I desire to hear duly. That history hath been born of the ocean-like mind of the great *Rishi* of soul purified by *yoga*. Thou foremost of good men, recite it unto me, for my thirst hath not been appeased by all thou hast said."

Sauti said: "Hearing that Janamejaya was installed in the Snake-sacrifice, the learned *Rishi* Krishna-Dwaipayana went thither on the occasion. He, the grandfather of the Pandavas, was born in an island of the Yamuna, of the virgin Kali by Sakti's son Parasara. Foremost of *Veda*-knowing ones he divided the *Veda* into four parts. He had knowledge of the supreme *Brahman*, knew the past by intuition, was holy, and cherished truth. Of sacred deeds and great fame, he begat Pandu, Dhritrashtra and Vidura in order to continue the line of Santanu.

The high-souled *Rishi*, with his disciples all versed in the *Vedas* and their branches, entered the sacrificial pavilion of the royal sage Janamejaya and saw the king seated in the sacrificial place looking like the god Indra, surrounded by numerous *Sadasyas*, by kings of several lands and by eminent *Ritwiks* like unto *Brahma* himself. Beholding the *Rishi* approaching, Janamejaya was delighted and advanced quickly with his followers and relatives to receive him. And, with the approval of the *Sadasyas*, he offered the *Rishi* a golden seat and worshipped him according to the rites of the scriptures, offering him water to wash his feet and mouth, the *Arghya* and kine. Vyasa was highly pleased and, after enquiring about the monarch's welfare, paid his respects to the assembled *Sadasyas*. Janamejaya then asked that first of Brahmanas with folded hands as follows:—

'O Brahman, thou hast seen with thy own eyes the exploits of the Kurus and the Pandavas. I wish to hear thee recite their history. What was the cause of the disunion amongst those heroes? Why also was that great battle which caused the death of countless creatures fought between my grandfathers—their understanding being dimmed by fate? Tell me all this in full exactly as it happened.'

"Hearing those words of Janamejaya, Krishna-Dwaipayana said to his disciple Vaisampayana seated by his side, 'The dissensions that arose between the Kurus and the Pandavas of old, recount thou all even as thou hast heard from me.'

Then that Brahmana recited the whole of that ancient history unto the king and all the chieftains there assembled.

Vaisampayana said: "Hear, O monarch, why that disunion occurred between the Kurus and the Pandavas, and why also that exile of the Pandavas into the woods, following the game at dice prompted by the Kurus who were greedy of power.

On the death of their father (in the forest) those heroes (the Pandavas) returned to Hastinapura, and within a short time they became well-versed in the science of the bow. Seeing their superior strength, skill, intelligence and also their popularity with the people, the Kurus became exceedingly jealous. Then the crooked-minded Duryodhana and Karna, with the son of Suvala, began to persecute them and devise means for their exile in order to have undisputed sovereignty. The wicked son of Dhritharashtra even gave poison to Bhima, but Bhima who had the stomach of a wolf digested the poison with the food. Again, the wretch tied the sleeping Bhima and cast him into the Ganga. But when Bhimasena of strong arms woke, he tore the strings with which he had been tied and came up. And while asleep and in the water, black snakes of virulent poison bit him all over his body, but that slayer of foes did not still perish. While they were thus being persecuted by their cousins, the high-minded Vidura was constantly busy neutralising their evil designs and rescuing them. As Sakra from the heavens keeps in happiness the world of men, so did Vidura always keep the Pandavas from evil.

When Duryodhana found himself unable to destroy the Pandavas who seemed to be protected by the fates themselves and kept alive for grave future purposes (such as the extermination of the Kuru race), he called together his counsellors, Karna, Dussasana and others, and with the knowledge of Dhritharashtra caused a house of lac to be constructed for them. And King Dhritharashtra, out of partiality for his children and tempted by the desire for sovereignty, sent the Pandavas away from Hastinapura on

some pretext. When they left for Varanavata, Vidura warned them, and with his help they escaped destruction.

The sons of Kunti lived in the town of Varanavata with their mother for a year. They occupied the palace of lac but kept a careful watch over the machinations of Purochana, the agent of Duryodhana. And causing a subterranean passage to be constructed, they set fire to the house, and burning Purochana to death they fled with their mother into the woods. It was here that Bhima obtained Hidimba, the sister of a Rakshasa he slew, for a wife, and it was of her that Ghatotkacha was born. Then the Pandavas went to a town called Ekachakra and dwelt there disguised as *Brahmacharins*. And it was here that Bhima of mighty arms had an encounter with a mighty man-eating Rakshasa of the name of Baka whom he slew and thereby secured safety and liberty for the inhabitants of that place. Then learning that Krishna (the princess of Panchala) was going to select a husband from among the assembled princes they went to Panchala, and winning Draupadi (who became their common wife) they dwelt there for a year. And when they returned to Hastinapura, Dhritrashtra and the son of Santanu (Bhishma) said unto them: 'Dear ones, in order to avoid strife between you and your cousins, we have settled that Khandavaprastha should be your abode.' The Pandavas then went with all their friends and followers to Khandavaprastha taking with them many jewels and precious stones, and lived there for many years. They brought, by force of arms, many princes under subjection. Bhima of great reputation subjugated the East; the heroic Arjuna, the North; Nakula, the West; and Sahadeva, the South. And what with the five Pandavas, each like unto the Sun in splendour, it seemed as if the Earth was having six Suns.

Then, for some reason, Yudhishtira the just, gifted with great energy and prowess, sent his brother Arjuna, dearer unto him than life itself, into the woods. And Arjuna, that tiger among men, of firm soul, and gifted with every virtue, lived in the woods for eleven years and ten months.

During this period, Arjuna went to see Krishna in Dwaravati and there obtained for a wife the lotus-eyed Subhadra of sweet speech, younger sister of Vasudeva. Then, O best of monarchs, Arjuna and Vasudeva gratified Agni, the carrier of the sacrificial butter, in the forest of Khandava, and Agni gave unto the son of Pritha the excellent bow *Gandiva*, a quiver that was inexhaustible and a war chariot bearing the emblem of an ape on its standard. It was on this occasion that Arjuna saved the great *Asura* (Maya) from being consumed in the fire. And Maya, in gratitude, built for the Pandavas a celestial palace decked with precious stones. Deceiving Yudhishtira at a game of dice played through the son of Suvala, Duryodhana finally sent the Pandavas into the woods for twelve years with an additional year thereafter to be passed in concealment, thus making the period of exile full thirteen years.

And in the fourteenth year, O monarch, when the Pandavas returned and claimed their kingdom, they did not get it. War followed in which the whole race of Kshatriyas was exterminated, and slaying Duryodhana the Pandavas got back their ruined kingdom.

This, in short, is the history of the Pandavas who never acted under the influence of evil passion; and this the account, O first of victorious monarchs, of the disunion that ended in the loss of their kingdom by the Kurus and the victory of the Pandavas."

Janamejaya said: 'O excellent of Brahmanas, thou hast, indeed, given me a brief sketch of the story of the great exploits of the Kurus. But, O thou of ascetic wealth, recite now that wonderful narration fully. I feel a great curiosity to hear it. It could not have been a trifling cause for which the virtuous ones had to kill those whom they should not have slain, and for which they are yet applauded by the world. Why did those tigers among men, innocent and capable of defending themselves, meekly submit to persecution at the hands of the wicked Kurus? How did Bhima of mighty arms and the strength of ten thousand elephants suppress

his anger, though wronged? And how is it that the chaste Krishna, the daughter of Drupada, wronged by those wretches and able to consume them, did not yet burn the sons of Dhritrashtra with her eyes inflamed with wrath? Why also did the two other sons of Pritha (Bhima and Arjuna) and the two sons of Madri (Nakula and Sahadeva), themselves injured by the wretched Kurus, follow Yudhishtira who indulged in the evil habit of gambling? Why also did Yudhishtira, that foremost of all virtuous men, the son of Dharma himself, fully acquainted with all the canons of conduct, meet with such great sorrow? Again, why did the Pandava Dhananjaya, having Krishna for his charioteer, who, with his arrows, despatched to the other world dauntless hosts of warriors suffer such hardship? O thou of ascetic wealth, tell me all this even as it happened and all the achievements of those mighty charioteers.'

Vaisampayana said: "O monarch, appoint thou a time for hearing it. This history as narrated by Krishna-Dwaipayana is very extensive. He that reads it to others and they that hear it read attain to the world of Brahman and become equal to the very gods. This *Bharata* is equal unto the *Vedas* and is a *Purana* worshipped by the *Rishis*. This history is called *Jaya*. It should be heard by those desirous of victory. A king by hearing it can bring the whole world under subjection and conquer all his foes. It should always be heard by a young monarch along with his queen, for then they beget a heroic son or a daughter to succeed to the throne. This history is the high and sacred science of *Dharma*, *Artha*, and also of *Moksha*.

"The sins that are committed daily by our senses or the mind, knowingly or unknowingly, are all destroyed by hearing the *Mahabharata*. This *Bharata* is said to be as much a mine of gems as the illustrious Ocean or the great mountain Meru. He that giveth a copy of the *Bharata* to one that asketh for it doth, indeed, make a present equal to the whole earth with her belt of seas. O son of Parikshit, this pleasant narration that giveth virtue and victory I am about to recite

in its entirety. Listen to it. The sage Krishna-Dwaipayana sitting at it day and night for three years composed this wonderful history. O bull amongst the Bharata monarchs, whatever is said in it on *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha* may be found elsewhere; but what is not given here cannot be seen anywhere."

DUSHYANTA GOES HUNTING

Janamejaya said: "I desire to hear from thee about the birth and life of the high-souled *Bharata* and of the origin of *Sakuntala*. And, holy one, I also desire to hear all about *Dushyanta*—that lion among men—and how the hero obtained *Sakuntala*."

Vaisampayana said: "Once upon a time King *Dushyanta* of mighty arms, accompanied by a large force, went into the forest. And he took with him hundreds of horses and elephants. The force that accompanied the monarch was of four kinds (foot-soldiers, car-warriors, cavalry and elephants), and the heroes were armed with swords and darts and carried in their hands maces and stout clubs. With the leonine roars of the warriors, the notes of conchs and sound of drums, with the rattle of the wheels of chariots and shrieks of huge elephants, all mingling with the neighing of horses and the clash of weapons of the forces armed and accoutred in diverse ways, there arose a deafening tumult as the king marched on. From the terraces of goodly mansions beautiful women beheld the progress of that heroic monarch. They likened him unto *Sakra* and believed that he was the wielder of the thunderbolt himself. They said, 'This is that tiger among men who in battle is equal unto the *Vasus* in prowess, and owing to the might of whose arms there are no foes left,' and affectionately showered flowers on his head. Followed by the elite of *Brahmanas* uttering blessings all the way, the king marched towards the forest in high spirits eager to slay deer. The citizens and others followed the monarch for some distance, but at last they refrained from going

further at the command of the king. And the king then mounting his chariot of winged speed filled the whole Earth and even the heavens with the rattle of his chariot wheels.

As he went, he saw around him a forest like unto *Nandana* itself (the celestial gardens) full of *Bilwa*, *Arka*, *Khadira* (catechu), *Kopittha* and *Dhava* trees. There was no water; and there were no human beings in the forest which extended for many *yojanas* around and was full of deer, lions, and other terrible beasts of prey.

And King Dushyanta, assisted by his followers and the warriors in his train, probed the forest, killing numerous animals. And when the forest was thus devastated by the king, the lions began to leave it in large numbers. Deprived of their leaders, herds of animals from fear and anxiety began to utter loud cries as they fled in all directions. Fatigued with running, they began to drop down on all sides, unable to slake their thirst in the river-beds that were quite dry. Many of them were eaten up raw by the hungry warriors, while others were eaten up after being duly quartered and roasted on fire. And many powerful elephants, maddened with the wounds they had received and alarmed beyond measure, fled with upraised trunks trampling, as they ran, many warriors to death. That forest which had been so full of animals was soon denuded of lions and tigers and other monarchs of the wilderness.

Then the king with his followers entered another forest in quest of game. Attended by a single follower and hungry and thirsty, he reached a large desert on the frontiers of the forest. Having crossed this the king came upon another forest full of the retreats of ascetics, beautiful to the eye and delightful to the heart. The air was cool and agreeable. The trees were all covered with blossoms; and the ground was carpeted with the softest and greenest sward. Extending for many miles around, the forest resounded with the sweet notes of winged warblers—the male *Kokila* and the shrill cicala. Numerous and majestic were the trees whose outspread branches formed a shady canopy overhead.

All around, the bees hovered over flowery creepers. There were beautiful bowers everywhere. There was no tree without fruits; none that had prickles on it; and none that had no bees swarming around it.

Such was the magnificent forest that the great bowman entered. With branches adorned with clusters of flowers, the trees, moved by the soft breeze, began to wave gently and rain their blossoms over the monarch's head. Clad in their flowery attire of variegated colours and with sweet-throated warblers perching on them, the trees stood there marshalled in rows with their crowns touching the very heavens; and around their branches which were drooping under the load of flowers, the bees tempted by honey hummed in sweet chorus. And the forest looked exceedingly charming with the flowery branches of the trees ranged around twining with each other and looking like so many rainbows. It was the resort of bands of *Siddhas*, of the *Charanas*, of tribes of *Gandharvas*, and of *Apsaras*, of monkeys and *Kinnaras* drunk with joy. A delicious and cool breeze laden with the scent of fresh flowers blew in all directions as if it had come there to sport with the trees. Verily, the cluster of towering trees was like unto a gaily decorated pole erected in Indra's honour.

And, in that forest, the monarch noticed a delightful and charming retreat of ascetics. There were many trees around it, and the sacred fire was burning within it. He saw therein numerous *Yatis*, *Valakhilyas* and other *Munis*. And by its side there flowed the sacred and transparent Malini with every species of water-fowl playing on its bosom. On its banks the king beheld many innocent animals of the deer species and was exceedingly delighted with all he saw.

It was on the banks of that stream that the excellent asylum of the illustrious Kasyapa stood, sheltering numerous *Rishis* of great ascetic merit. Desirous of beholding the great *Rishi* of ascetic wealth, the illustrious Kanwa of the race of Kasyapa, the monarch, laying aside all signs of royalty, entered with but his minister and his priest. He

heard in some places the chanting of the *Rigveda* hymns by eminent Brahmanas according to the just rules of intonation. Certain other places were graced with Brahmanas acquainted with the ordinances of sacrifice, of the *Angas*, and the hymns of the *Yajurveda*. Yet other places were filled with the harmonious strains of *Saman* hymns sung by vow-observing *Rishis*. There were also Brahmanas learned in the *Atharvan Veda*. In fact, that sacred retreat, resounding with these holy notes, was like unto a second region of Brahma himself. Again, there were many Brahmanas proficient in logic and the mental sciences; in the science of words (grammar), of prosody, of *Nirukta*; in astrology; capable of understanding the cries of birds and monkeys; and skilled in various sciences. And the slayer of hostile heroes saw around him learned Brahmanas of rigid vows engaged in *Japa* and *Homa*. The more the king saw of that auspicious and sacred asylum of Kasyapa, protected by that *Rishi's* ascetic virtues and possessing all the requisites of a holy retreat, the more he longed to see it."

THE STORY OF SAKUNTALA

Vaisampayana said: "The monarch then, as he proceeded, left even his reduced attendants at the threshold of the asylum. And entering alone, he saw not the *Rishi* (Kanwa) of rigid vows. Finding that the abode was empty, he shouted 'What ho, who is there?'; and the sound of his voice was echoed back, loud as it was. But, hearing the sound of his voice, there appeared a maiden lovely as Sree herself but dressed as an ascetic's daughter. The black-eyed fair one, on seeing King Dushyanta, bade him welcome and, showing him due respect by offering a seat, water to wash his feet, and the *Arghya*, enquired after the monarch's welfare. Then the maiden reverentially asked: 'What can I do, O king! I await your commands.' The king said unto that maiden of faultless features and sweet speech: 'I have come to pay my respects to the highly blessed *Rishi* Kanwa. Tell me,

O amiable and beautiful one, where has the illustrious *Rishi* gone ?'

Sakuntala then answered: 'My illustrious father hath gone out to fetch fruit. Wait but a moment and thou canst see him when he arrives.'

Vaisampayana continued: 'The king observed that the maiden was of rare beauty, fair of form and had a sweet smile. As she stood before him decked in the beauty of her faultless features, her ascetic penances, and her humility, he noted that she was in the full bloom of youth. He asked her: 'Who art thou? And whose daughter, O beautiful one? Why hast thou come into the woods? O handsome one, gifted with so much beauty and such virtues, whence hast thou come? O charming one, at the very first glance thou hast stolen my heart. I desire to learn all about thee.' Smiling, the maiden replied sweetly: 'O Dushyanta, I am the daughter of the virtuous, wise, high-souled and illustrious ascetic Kanwa.'

Dushyanta said (in astonishment): 'Even Dharma himself might fail from his course, but an ascetic of rigid vows will never break his vow (of celibacy). Therefore, O thou of fairest complexion, how couldst thou be his daughter? This great doubt of mine it behoveth thee to dispel.'

Sakuntala then replied: 'Hear, O king, what I have learnt regarding all that befell me of old and how I came to be regarded as the daughter of the *Muni*. Once, a *Rishi* came here and asked about my birth.' In answer to that *Rishi's* enquiries my father Kanwa said:

'Viswamitra of old, practising the austere of penances, alarmed Indra, the chief of the celestials, who thought that the mighty ascetic of blazing energy would, by his penances, hurl him down from his high seat in heaven. Thus perturbed Indra summoned Menaka and told her: 'Thou, Menaka, art the first of celestial *Apsaras*. Therefore, amiable one do me this service: This great ascetic Viswamitra, like unto the Sun in splendour, is engaged in the severest of penances

My heart is trembling with fear. Indeed, O slender-waisted Menaka, this is thy business. Go and tempt him, and frustrating his continued austerities accomplish my good. Win him away from his penances, O beautiful one, by tempting him with thy beauty, youth, charm, arts, smiles and speech.'

And, Menaka replied: 'The illustrious Viswamitra is endued with great energy and is a mighty ascetic. He is very wrathful also, as is known to thee. When the energy, penances, and wrath of the high-souled one have even ruffled thee, how can I help feeling alarmed? He it was who caused even the illustrious Vasishtha bear the pangs of witnessing the premature death of his children. He it was who, though born a Kshatriya, subsequently became a Brahmana by virtue of his ascetic penances. He it was who, for purposes of his ablutions, created a deep river that could with difficulty be forded, and which sacred stream is known by the name of Kausiki. It was Viswamitra whose wife, in a season of distress, was maintained by the royal sage Matanga (Trisanku) who was then living, under a father's curse, as a hunter. It was Viswamitra who, in return for the services of Matanga, himself became the latter's priest for purposes of a sacrifice. Was it not Viswamitra who in anger fashioned forth another world and numerous stars beginning with Sravana? Again, it was he who granted protection to Trisanku suffering under a superior's curse. I am frightened to approach him of such deeds. Tell me, O Indra, how I should set about so that I may not be consumed by his wrath. He can burn the three worlds by his splendour and, by stamping his foot, cause the Earth to quake. He can sever the great Meru from the Earth and hurl it to any distance. He can go round the ten points of the Earth in a moment. How dare a mere woman like me touch such a one? At the thought of his prowess Yama, Soma, the great *Rishis*, the *Sadhyas*, the *Viswas*, the *Valakhilyas*, are all frightened. And can a woman like me gaze at him without alarm? Commanded, however, by thee, O king of

the celestials, I shall somehow approach that *Rishi*. But, chief of the gods, devise thou some plan so that, protected by thee, I may safely sport before that *Rishi*. When I begin to play before the *Rishi*, Marut (the god of wind) had better be there and deprive me of my dress, and let Manmatha (the god of love) also, at thy command, help me then. Let also Marut on that occasion bear thither fragrance from the woods to tempt the *Rishi*.'

"And Sakra then commanded him who could approach every place (*viz.*, the god of wind) to be present with Menaka when she appeared before the *Rishi*. The timid and beautiful Menaka then entered the retreat and beheld Viswamitra who had burnt all his sins by his penances and was still engaged in ascetic devotions. Greeting the *Rishi* she began to sport before him. Just at that time Marut blew away her garments that were white as the Moon. And she thereupon ran, as if in great bashfulness, to catch hold of her attire. Beholding her divested of her robes, that best of *Munis* noted that she was exceedingly handsome, of faultless features and with no marks of age on her person. Captivated by her beauty and accomplishments, that bull amongst *Rishis* paid addresses to her and they then passed a long time there in each other's company. Sporting with each other, just as they pleased, for a long time as if it were only a single day, the *Rishi* begot by Menaka a daughter named Sakuntala. As her conception advanced, Menaka went to the banks of the river Malini, coursing along a valley of the charming mountains of Himavat, where she gave birth to that daughter. And leaving the new-born infant on the bank of that river she went away. Beholding the new-born infant lying in that forest destitute of human beings and infested with lions and tigers, a number of vultures collected round it to protect it from harm. I happened to go there to perform my ablutions and saw the infant lying in the solitude of the wilderness surrounded by vultures. Bringing her hither I adopted her as my daughter. Indeed, the maker of the body, the protector of life and the giver of food are, all three,

fathers in that order according to the scriptures. And because she was surrounded in the wilderness by *Sakuntas* (birds) she hath been named by me *Sakuntala* (bird-protected). O Brahman, know that it is thus that Sakuntala came to be my daughter. And the faultless Sakuntala also regardeth me as her father.'

This is what my father said unto the *Rishi*. And, not knowing my real father, I regard Kanwa as my father."

Vaisampayana continued: "King Dushyanta, hearing all this, said: 'Well-spoken, O princess. Be my wife, O beautiful one! What can I do for thee? Golden garlands, robes, ear-rings of gold, whitest and lovely pearls from abroad, gold coins, finest carpets, I shall present thee this very day. Let the whole of my kingdom be thine to-day. O beautiful one! Come to me, O timid one, wedding me, O beautiful one, according to the *Gandharva* form. O thou of tapering thighs, of all forms of marriage the *Gandharva* form is regarded as the best.'

Sakuntala, hearing this, said: 'O king, my father hath gone into the woods to collect fruit. Wait but a moment and he will bestow me on thee.'

Dushyanta replied: 'O beautiful and faultless one, I desire that thou shouldst be my companion. Know thou that I exist for thee, and my heart is with thee. One is certainly one's own friend and may depend upon one's own self. Therefore, according to the ordinance, thou canst certainly bestow thyself. There are, in all, eight forms of marriage. These are *Brahma*,¹ *Daiva*, *Arsha*, *Prajapatya*, *Asura*, *Gandharva*,² *Rakshasa*,³ and *Paisacha*. Manu hath spoken of the appropriateness of all these forms in their order. Know, O faultless one, that the first four of these are approved for Brahmanas, and the first six for Kshatriyas. As regards kings, even the *Rakshasa* form is permissible.

¹ 'The gift of a daughter to a man learned in the Veda.'

² 'From affection without any nuptial rite.'

³ 'Marrying a girl carried off as a prize in war.'

The *Asura* form is permitted to Vaisyas and Sudras. Of the first five the first three are proper, the other two being improper. The *Paisacha* and the *Asura* forms should never be practised. These are the institutes of religion, and one should act according to them. The *Gandharva* and the *Rakshasa* forms are consistent with the practice of Kshatriyas. Thou needst not entertain the least fear. There is not the least doubt that, either according to any one of these last-mentioned forms or according to a union of both of them, our wedding may take place. O thou of fairest complexion, full of desire as I am, thou also in a similar mood mayst become my wife according to the *Gandharva* form.'

Sakuntala answered: 'If this be the course sanctioned by religion and if, indeed, I am my own disposer, listen, O thou foremost one of Puru's race, to the stipulation I wish to make. Between ourselves promise truly to give me what I ask of thee. The son that shall be born to me shall be thy heir-apparent. This, O king, is my fixed resolve. O Dushyanta, if thou grantest this, then I am yours.'

Vaisampayana continued: "The monarch, without giving any further thought, told her: 'Let it be so. I will even take thee, thou of agreeable smiles, with me to my capital. I tell thee truly, O beautiful one, thou deservest all this.' And so saying, that foremost of kings wedded handsome Sakuntala of graceful gait. Assuring her duly, he then departed, telling her repeatedly, 'I shall send thee, for thy escort, my troops of four classes. Indeed, it is even thus that I shall take thee to my capital, thou of sweet smiles.'

Vaisampayana continued: "O Janamejaya, having so promised unto her, the king went away. As he was returning homewards, he began anxiously to think of Kasyapa and he asked within himself, 'What would the illustrious ascetic say when he comes to know of this?'

Soon after the king had left, Kanwa arrived at his abode. But Sakuntala, out of modesty, did not go out to receive her father as usual. That great ascetic, however, gifted with spiritual insight, divined what had happened. Indeed, the

illustrious one was pleased and addressing her said, 'That best of men, Dushyanta, is high-souled and virtuous. Thou hast, Sakuntala, accepted him for thy husband. The son that shall be born of thee will be mighty and illustrious in this world. He will have sway over the whole of this earth bounded by the sea, and his forces will be irresistible.'

Sakuntala then approached her fatigued father and washed his feet. She relieved him of his burden, and after arranging the fruits properly she said to him: 'It behoveth thee to give thy grace to that Dushyanta whom I have accepted for my husband, as well as to his ministers.'

Kanwa replied: 'O thou of fairest complexion, for thy sake I am inclined to bless him. But receive from me, blessed one, the boon that thou desirest.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Sakuntala, thereupon, anxious to benefit Dushyanta, asked that the Paurava monarchs might ever be virtuous and never be deprived of their throne."

THE BIRTH OF BHARATA

Vaisampayana said: "Sometime after Dushyanta had left her having made those promises, Sakuntala brought forth a boy of immeasurable energy. He had beauty, nobility and every accomplishment. That first of virtuous men, Kanwa, caused all the customary religious rites to be performed. When he was only six years old he used to seize and bind to the trees that stood around that asylum lions, tigers, bears, buffaloes and elephants. The inmates of Kanwa's asylum, thereupon, bestowed on him a name. They said, because he seizes and restrains all animals however strong, let him be called *Sarvadamana* (the conqueror of all).

Seeing the boy growing up rapidly and marking also his extraordinary deeds the *Rishi* told Sakuntala that the time had come for his installation as the heir-apparent, and commanded his disciples saying: 'Bear ye without delay this Sakuntala with her son from this abode to that of her

husband. Women should not live too long in the houses of their paternal or maternal relations. Such residence is destructive of their reputation and their good conduct.' Then she of fair eye-brows, taking with her that boy of celestial beauty with eyes like unto lotus, left the woods where she had been first loved by Dushyanta. After introducing her to the king the disciples of the *Rishi* returned to the asylum. And Sakuntala, having worshipped the king according to proper form, said: 'This is thy son, O king. Let him be installed as thy heir-apparent. O best of men, fulfil now the promise thou gavest me. Call to thy mind the agreement thou made on the occasion of thy union with me in the asylum of Kanwa.'

The king, hearing her words and remembering everything, yet said: 'I do not remember anything. Who art thou, O wicked woman in ascetic guise? I do not remember having had anything to do with thee in respect of *Dharma*, *Kama* and *Artha*. Go or stay or do as thou pleasest.'

Thus addressed by him, the fair-coloured innocent one was abashed. Stunned by grief she stood for a time motionless like a wooden post. Soon, however, her eyes turned red like copper, her lips began to quiver, and the glances she now and then cast upon the king seemed to burn the latter. Her rising wrath and the fire of her asceticism, she checked, however, by an extraordinary effort. Gathering herself in a moment, her heart heavy with sorrow and rage, and looking at him she thus addressed her lord in anger:

'Knowing everything, O monarch, how canst thou, like the vulgar, say that thou knowest not? Thy heart bears witness to the truth or falsehood of this matter. Therefore, speak truly without degrading thyself. He who, being one thing, representeth himself as another thing to others is like a thief and a robber of his own self. Of what sin is he not capable? Thou thinkest that thou alone hast knowledge of thy deed. But knowest thou not that the Ancient, Omniscient one (Narayana) liveth in thy heart? He knoweth all thy sins, and thou sinnest in His presence. He that sins

thinks that none observes him. But he is observed by the gods and by Him also who is in every heart. The Sun, Moon, Air, Fire, Earth, Sky, Water, Heart, and Yama, the Day, the Night, both Twilights and *Dharma*, all witness the conduct of man. Him who degradeth himself by representing himself falsely, the gods never bless. Even his own soul blesseth him not. I am a wife devoted to my husband. I have come of my own accord, it is true. But do not, on that account, treat me with disrespect. I am thy wife and, therefore, deserve to be treated courteously. In the presence of so many, why dost thou treat me like a common woman? Surely, I am not crying in the wilderness. Dost thou not hear me? But if thou refusest to do what I supplicate thee, O Dushyanta, thy head shall this moment burst into a hundred pieces.

Knowest thou not that by a son one conquereth the three worlds. By a son's son, one enjoyeth eternity. And by a grandson's son great-grandfathers enjoy everlasting happiness. She is a true wife who is skilful in household affairs. She is a true wife who hath borne a son. She is a true wife whose heart is devoted to her lord and who knoweth none but her lord. The wife is half the man and the foremost of friends. The wife is the spring of virtue, profit and pleasure. The wife is the root of salvation. They that have wives can perform religious rites. They that have wives can lead domestic lives. They that have wives are blest with the means to be cheerful. They that have wives can achieve good fortune. Sweet-speeched wives are friends on occasions of joy. They are as fathers in setting one on the righteous path and as mothers in times of sickness and sorrow. Even in the deep woods a wife is refreshment and solace to the traveller. He that hath a wife is trusted by all. A wife, therefore, is one's most precious possession. Even when the husband goeth into the region of Yama, it is the devoted wife that accompanies him thither. A wife leaving the world before him waits for her lord in the other world. But if the husband goeth before, the chaste wife followeth

close. For these reasons, O king, doth marriage exist. The husband enjoyeth the companionship of the wife both in this and in the other world. The learned have declared that one is himself born as one's son. Therefore, a man whose wife hath borne a son should look upon her as his mother. Men scorched by mental grief, or suffering from bodily pain, feel as much refreshed in the companionship of their wives as a perspiring person in a cool bath. No man, even in anger, should ever do anything that is disagreeable to his wife, seeing that happiness, joy, virtue, and everything dependeth on the wife.

What greater happiness can there be than what the father feels when the son running to him, even though his body be covered with dust, clasps his limbs? Why then dost thou treat with indifference such a son who hath approached thee himself and who casteth wistful glances towards thee to get on thy knees? The touch of soft sandal paste, of women or of (cool) water is not so agreeable as the touch of one's own infant son locked in one's embrace. As a Brahmana is the foremost of all bipeds, a cow the foremost of all quadrupeds, a protector the foremost of all superiors, so is the son the foremost of all objects agreeable to the touch. Let, therefore, this handsome child embrace thee. O chastiser of foes, I have brought forth this child, capable of dispelling all thy sorrows, after bearing him in my womb for full three years. O monarch of Puru's race, '*He shall perform a hundred horse-sacrifices*' uttered a voice from the heavens when I was in the lying-in room. Thou knowest that Brahmanas repeat the following Vedic *mantras* on the occasion of the consecrating rites of infancy: 'Thou art born, O son, of my body. Thou art sprung from my heart. Thou art myself in the form of a son. Live thou to a hundred years. My life dependeth on thee, and the continuation of my race also on thee. Therefore, O son, live thou in great happiness to a hundred years.'

In the course of hunting and while engaged in pursuit of deer I was approached by thee, O king—I who was then a

virgin in the asylum of my father. Urvasi, Purvachitti, Sahajanya, Menaka, Viswachi and Ghrithachi, these are the six foremost of *Apsaras*. Amongst them, again, Menaka, born of Brahman, is the first. Descending from heaven on Earth, after intercourse with Viswamitra, she gave birth to me in a valley of Himavat. Bereft of all affection, she went away, leaving me there as if I was the child of others. What sin did I commit of old in a former life that I should in infancy be abandoned by my parents and that I should now be cast off by thee ! Spurned by thee, I am prepared to return to the asylum of my father. But it behoveth thee not to disown this child who is thine.

Hearing all this, Dushyanta said: 'Women generally speak untruth. Who shall believe thy words ? Destitute of all affection, the lewd Menaka is thy mother, and thou wert cast off by her as one throws away, after the worship is over, the flowery offerings made to the gods. Thy father too, of the Kshatriya race, the lustful Viswamitra, who was tempted to become a Brahmana, is destitute of all affection. However, Menaka is the first of *Apsaras* and thy father also is the first of *Rishis*. Being their daughter, why dost thou speak like a woman of loose character ? Thy words deserve no credit. Art thou not ashamed to speak them, especially before me ? Go hence, O wicked woman in ascetic guise. Thy child too is grown up. Thou sayest he is a boy, but he is very big. How hath he so soon grown like a *Sala* sprout ? Thy birth is low. O woman of ascetic guise, all that thou sayest is quite unknown to me. I do not know thee. Go whithersoever thou chooseth.'

Sakuntala replied: 'Thou noticest, O king, the faults of others, even though they be as small as a mustard seed. But, looking at thy own, thou takest no notice of them although they be as large as the *Bilwa* fruit. Menaka is one of the celestials. Indeed, Menaka is reckoned as the first of celestials. My birth, therefore, is far higher than thine. Thou walkest upon the Earth, O king, but I roam in the skies. Behold, the difference between us is as that between

the mountain Meru and a mustard seed. Behold my power ! I can repair to the abodes of Indra, Kuvera, Yama and Varuna.

What I am going to say now is true, O sinless one ! I mention it merely by way of illustration and not from any malice. Therefore, it behoveth thee to pardon me after thou hast listened to it. An ugly person considereth himself handsomer than others till he sees his own face in the mirror. But when he sees his own ugly reflection in the mirror, it is then that he perceiveth the difference between himself and others. He that is really handsome never taunts anybody. And he that always talketh evil becometh a reviler. As the swine is always drawn to dirt and filth even in the midst of a flower-garden, so the wicked always choose the evil out of the evil and good that others speak. But the wise note only what is good, like geese that always extract only the milk, though it be mixed with water. As the honest are always pained at speaking ill of others, so do the wicked ever take delight in disparaging others. The wicked ever speak ill of the honest. But the latter never injure the former, even if injured by them. Could anything be more ridiculous than that those that are themselves wicked should represent the really honest as wicked ?

The *Pitris* have said that, as the son continueth the race and the line, it is one's highest duty to have a son. Therefore, none should abandon a son. Therefore, O lord of Earth, cherish thy own self, truth and virtue by cherishing thy son. O lion among monarchs, it behoveth thee not to persist in this deceit. The dedication of a tank is more meritorious than that of a hundred wells. A sacrifice, again, is more meritorious than the dedication of a tank. A son is more meritorious than a sacrifice. And truth is more meritorious than a hundred sons. A thousand horse-sacrifices and Truth were once weighed in the balance, and Truth was found heavier. O king, Truth, I ween, may be equal to the study of the entire *Vedas* and ablutions in all holy places put together. There is no virtue equal to Truth. There is

nothing superior to Truth. O king, Truth is God himself. Truth is the highest vow. Therefore, violate not thy pledge, O monarch; let Truth and thee be ever united. If thou creditest not my words, I shall of my own accord go hence. Indeed, thy companionship should be avoided.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Having spoken to the monarch in this wise Sakuntala left his presence. But as soon as she had left, a voice from the skies emanating from no visible shape thus spoke unto Dushyanta as he was sitting surrounded by his household priests, preceptors and ministers. The voice said: 'The mother is but the sheath of flesh; the son sprung from the father is the father himself. Therefore, O Dushyanta, cherish thy son, and insult not Sakuntala. Thou art the progenitor of this boy. Sakuntala hath spoken the truth. Therefore, cherish, O monarch, thy son born of Sakuntala. And because this child is to be cherished by thee even at our word, therefore shall this thy son be known by the name of *Bharata* (the cherished).' Hearing these words the monarch of Puru's race was overjoyed and spoke as follows unto his priests and ministers: 'Hear ye these words uttered by the celestial messenger? I have myself known this one to be my son. But if I had accepted him as my son on the strength of Sakuntala's words alone, my people would have been suspicious and my son would not have been regarded as pure.'

"The monarch then, O thou of Bharata's race, seeing the legitimacy of his son established by the celestial messenger, became exceedingly glad; and with a joyous heart then performed all those rites that a father should perform for his son. The king smelt his child's head and hugged him with affection; the Brahmanas began to utter benedictions and minstrels sang his praise. Dushyanta also received his wife with affection and spoke these words, pacifying her lovingly: 'O goddess, my union with thee took place privately. Therefore, I was considering how best to establish thy purity. My people might think that we were only lustfully united and not as husband and wife and, therefore,

this son that I would have installed as my heir-apparent would have been regarded as one of impure birth. And, dearest, every harsh word thou hast uttered in thy anger, O large-eyed one, I forgive. Thou art my dearest.'

The son of Dushyanta reduced to subjection all the kings of the Earth and ruled virtuously earning great fame. That monarch of great prowess was known by the titles of *Chakravarti* and *Sarvabhauma*. He performed many sacrifices like Sakra, the lord of the Maruts. Kanwa was the chief priest at those sacrifices and large gifts were given to Brahmanas. Bharata gave unto Kanwa a thousand gold coins as the sacrificial fee. It is after that Bharata that his descendants are so named. And in the Bharata race there were born innumerable monarchs gifted with great energy and like unto Brahman himself. But, I shall name only the principal ones that were blessed with great good fortune, like unto the gods, and devoted to truth and honesty."

BHARATA'S DESCENDANTS—SANTANU

Vaisampayana said: "There was a king of the house of Bharata called Pratipa who was kind to all creatures. He spent many years in ascetic penances at the source of the river Ganga. Pratipa, along with his wife, was engaged in austerities from a desire for offspring. And when they had grown old a son was born unto them. The child was called Santanu, because he was born when his father had subdued his passions by ascetic penances. When Santanu grew up into a youth, Pratipa said to him: 'Sometime ago, Santanu, a celestial damsel came to me for thy good. If thou meetest that fair-complexioned one in secret and if she solicit thee for children, accept her as thy wife; judge not of the propriety or impropriety of her conduct and ask not who she is or whose or whence, but accept her as thy wife at my command.'

Having thus commanded his son Santanu and installed him on the throne, Pratipa retired into the woods. Gifted

with great intelligence and equal unto Indra himself in splendour, Santanu was fond of hunting and passed much of his time in the woods. One day, as he was wandering along the banks of the Ganges, he reached a region frequented by *Siddhas* and *Charanas*, and there saw a lovely maiden like unto another Sree. Faultless and like pearls were her teeth, and she was decked with celestial ornaments and attired in garments of fine texture that resembled in splendour the filaments of the lotus. With steadfast gaze he seemed to be drinking her charms, but repeated draughts failed to quench his thirst. The damsel also, at the sight of the monarch of blazing splendour moving about in great agitation, was herself moved and fell in love with him. She gazed and gazed and longed to gaze on him evermore. The monarch then in soft words addressed her: 'O slender-waisted one, beest thou a goddess or the daughter of a *Danava*, beest thou of the race of *Gandharvas* or *Apsaras*, beest thou of the *Yakshas* or the *Nagas*, or beest thou of human origin? O thou of celestial beauty, I solicit thee to be my wife.'

Of faultless features, the damsel, every word of whose speech thrilled the heart, replied: 'O king, I shall be thy wife and obey thy commands. But, thou must not interfere with me in anything I do, be it agreeable or disagreeable. Nor shalt thou ever address me unkindly. I shall certainly leave thee the moment thou interferest with me or speakest to me an unkind word.' The king answered: 'Be it so.' True to his promise, he refrained from crossing her in anything. And the lord of Earth, Santanu, was exceedingly gratified with her conduct, beauty, magnanimity and attention to his comforts. And the goddess Ganga also, of three courses (celestial, terrestrial and subterranean), assuming a human form and endued with celestial beauty, lived happily as the wife of Santanu, having, as the fruit of her virtuous acts, obtained for a husband, that tiger among kings equal unto Indra himself in splendour. Eight children were born unto him who in beauty were like the very celestials

themselves. But, O Bharata, those children, as soon as they were born, were one after another thrown into the river by Ganga who repeated: 'This is for thy good.' The king could not be pleased with such conduct. But he spoke not a word about it lest his wife should leave him. When the eighth child was born and his wife, as before, was about to throw it into the river, the king with a sorrowful countenance, and anxious to save it, addressed her and said: 'Kill it not. Who art thou and whose? Why dost thou take the life of thy own children? Murderess of thy sons, thou hast incurred a dreadful sin.'

His wife, thus addressed, replied: 'O thou desirous of offspring, I shall spare this child of thine. But, according to our agreement, the period of my stay with thee must now end. I am Ganga, the daughter of Jahnu. I am ever worshipped by the great sages; I have lived with thee thus long for accomplishing the purposes of the celestials. The eight illustrious Vasus endued with great energy had, from Vasishtha's curse, to assume human forms. I assumed a human form to bring them forth. Thou also, having become the father of the eight Vasus, hast acquired many regions of perennial bliss. It was also agreed between myself and the Vasus that I should free them from their human forms as soon as they would be born. I have thus freed them from the curse of the *Rishi*. Blest be thou; I leave thee.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Having said this, the goddess disappeared taking away the child with her. And that child of Santanu, known as both Gangeya and Devavrata, surpassed his father in all accomplishments.

After the disappearance of his wife, Santanu returned to his capital with a heavy heart. I shall now recount to thee the many virtues and the great good fortune of the illustrious king Santanu of the Bharata race.

The monarch Santanu, adored of the gods and royal sages, was known in all the worlds for his wisdom, virtue and truthfulness. The qualities of self-control, liberality,

forgiveness, intelligence, modesty, patience and prowess ever dwelt in that bull among men. His neck was marked with (three) lines, like a conch-shell; his shoulders were broad; and it would seem that all the auspicious signs of royalty found their fittest abode in him. Seeing the conduct of that monarch of great achievements, the world realised that virtue was ever superior to pleasure and profit. Indeed, never before was there a king like Santanu. And when the Earth was ruled by him and other monarchs like him, a high standard of duty was maintained by every order. The Kshatriyas served the Brahmanas; the Vaisyas waited upon the Kshatriyas, and the Sudras, adoring the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas, waited upon the Vaisyas. And Santanu residing in Hastinapura, the delightful capital of the Kurus, ruled the whole Earth bounded by the seas. He was free from anger and malice, and was handsome in person like Soma himself. In splendour he was like the Sun and in impetuosity of valour like Vayu; in wrath he was like Yama; and in patience like the Earth. Santanu was the king and father of all; of those that were miserable and those that had no protectors, of birds and beasts; in fact, of every created thing. And during the rule of that best of Kurus—of that king of kings—speech was always wedded to truth, and men's thoughts were ever inclined to charity and righteousness. After enjoying domestic felicity for six and thirty years Santanu retired into the woods.

And Santanu's son, the Vasu born of Ganga and named Devavrata, resembled Santanu himself in personal beauty, in habits, conduct and learning. In all branches of knowledge, worldly or spiritual, his proficiency was very great. His strength and energy were extraordinary. He was a mighty car-warrior.

One day, in the pursuit, along the banks of the Ganges, of a deer that he had struck with his arrow, King Santanu observed that the river had become shallow, and he began to reflect upon this unusual occurrence. He asked himself why that first of rivers ran not so quickly as before.

While seeking for a cause, the illustrious monarch observed that a youth of great comeliness, like Indra himself, had, by his celestial weapons, checked the flow of the river. Beholding this marvellous feat the king was struck with astonishment. The youth was no other than Santanu's son himself. But as Santanu had seen his son only once for a few moments after his birth, he could not identify that infant with the youth before him. The youth, however, seeing his father, knew him at once, but instead of disclosing his identity he clouded the king's perception by his celestial powers of illusion and disappeared before his very eyes.

King Santanu, wondering much at what he saw and imagining the youth to be his own son, invoked Ganga and said: 'Show me that child.' Ganga then appeared, assuming a beautiful form and holding the bejewelled boy with her right arm, and said: 'That eighth son whom thou hadst of me sometime before is this. O monarch, take him now. I have reared him with care. Highly intelligent, he has studied with Vasishtha the entire *Vedas* and their branches. Skilled in all weapons and a mighty bowman, he is, in battle, like Indra. O Bharata, both the gods and the *Asuras* look upon him with favour. Whatever branches of knowledge are known to Usanas, this one knoweth completely. And so is he the master of all those *Sastras* that the son of Angiras (Brihaspati), adored by the gods and the *Asuras*, knoweth. All the weapons known to the powerful and invincible Rama, the son of Jamadagni, are known to this thy illustrious son of mighty arms. And he is versed in the code of kingly conduct.'

Santanu then returned to his capital with his son, and summoning all the Pauravas together he installed his son as his heir-apparent and lived happily with him.

Four years had thus passed when the king one day went into the woods on the banks of the Yamuna. While rambling there he perceived a sweet scent coming from an unknown direction. Anxious to ascertain the cause, the monarch wandered hither and thither and finally came

upon a dark-eyed maiden of celestial beauty, the daughter of a fisherman. The king addressing her said: 'Who art thou, and whose daughter? What dost thou do here, O timid one?' She answered: 'Blest be thou. I am the daughter of the chief of fishermen. At his command, I am plying this ferry to take people across the river and thus acquire merit.' Beholding that maiden of heavenly mould endowed with beauty, amiableness, and such fragrance, Santanu fell in love with her and, repairing unto her father, solicited his consent to the match. But the chief of the fishermen replied: 'O king, if thou desirest to obtain this maiden as a gift from me, give me then this pledge and I will certainly bestow my daughter upon thee; for, verily, I can never obtain a husband for her like thee.'

Santanu replied: 'When I know what is the pledge thou askest, I shall be able to say whether I can give it. If it is possible to grant it I shall certainly do so. The fisherman said: 'O king, this is what I ask of thee: the son born of this maiden shall be installed by thee on thy throne and none else shalt thou make thy successor.'

Vaisampayana continued: "O Bharata, Santanu was not inclined to grant such a boon, though the fire of love was consuming him within. Love-sick, the king returned to Hastinapura and passed his time in sorrow. One day, Devavrata approaching his afflicted father said: 'Thou hast everything that makes for prosperity; all the chiefs obey thee; then, why is it that thou grieveest thus? Deep in thy own thoughts, thou speakest not a word to me in reply. Thou goest not out on horse-back now. Thou lookest pale and emaciated, and hast lost all animation. I wish to know what ails thee, so that I may try to find a remedy.' Santanu answered: 'Thou sayest truly, son, that I have become melancholy. I shall tell thee why I am so. O thou of Bharata's line, thou art the only scion of this our great race. Thou art always engaged in feats of arms and exploits of daring. Should any danger overtake thee, O child of Ganga, we become sonless. Of a truth, singly thou art to me more

than a hundred sons. May prosperity ever attend on thee so that our dynasty may be continued. Still, as the wise say, he that hath one son hath no son. It is this thought that hath made me so melancholy.' ”

BHISHMA'S RESOLVE

Vaisampayana continued: “Devavrata reflected within himself for a while. He then went to the aged minister devoted to his father and enquired of him the cause of the king's grief; and the latter apprised him of the pledge that was demanded by the chief of the fishermen in respect of his daughter Gandhavati. Then Devavrata, accompanied by many elderly Kshatriya chiefs, repaired to the chief of the fishermen and begged of him his daughter on behalf of the king. The chief of the fishermen received him with due respect, and when the prince had taken his seat he said: ‘Thou art the first of all wielders of weapons and the only son of Santanu. Thy power is great. If the bride's father was Indra himself, even he would be loth to reject an alliance so honourable and desirable. The great man from whom this celebrated maiden named Satyavati derives her birth is, indeed, equal to you in merit. He hath oft spoken to me of thy father's greatness and told me that that king alone is worthy of marrying Satyavati. I have even rejected the solicitations of that best of *Brahmarshis*—the celestial sage Asita—who has often asked for Satyavati's hand in marriage. But I wish to add one word on behalf of this maiden. To the proposed marriage there is one great objection arising from the fact of there being a rival to the throne in a co-wife's son; and he is not sure, even if he be an *Asura* or a *Gandharva*, who hath a rival in thee. There is only this objection to the proposed marriage and nothing else.’

“Devavrata having heard these words and wishing to serve his father answered thus in the hearing of the assembled chiefs: ‘O foremost of truthful men, listen to the vow I utter. The man has not been or will not be born who will have the

courage to take such a vow. I shall fulfil all that thou demandest. The son that may be born of this maiden shall be our king.' The chief of the fishermen then said: 'O thou of virtuous soul, thou art come hither as the plenipotentiary of thy father Santanu of infinite glory; be thou also the sole manager on my behalf in the matter of the bestowal of my daughter. But, there is something more to be said, something else to be reflected upon by thee. Those that have daughters, from the very nature of their obligations, would be bound to say what I am going to say. O thou that art devoted to truth, the promise thou hast given in the presence of these chiefs for the benefit of Satyavati is, indeed, worthy of thee. I have not the least doubt of its ever being violated by thee. But I have my apprehensions in respect of the children thou mayest beget.'

Vaisampayana continued: "O king, the son of Ganga then replied: 'Chief of fishermen, thou best of men, listen to what I say in the presence of these assembled kings. Ye kings, a little while ago I gave my word relinquishing my right to the throne; I shall now settle the matter of my children. From this day I adopt the vow of *Brahmacharyya* (celibacy). Though I die sonless, I shall yet attain to regions of perennial bliss in heaven.'

On hearing this, the hair on the fisherman's body stood erect from joy, and he replied: 'I bestow my daughter.' Immediately, from the firmament, the *Apsaras*, the gods and the assemblage of sages began to shower flowers upon the head of Devavrata and exclaimed: 'This one is *Bhishma* (the terrible).' Bhishma then said to the illustrious damsel, 'Mother, ascend this chariot and let us proceed to our house.'

On arriving with her at Hastinapura, he told Santanu all that had happened. And the assembled kings, jointly and individually, applauded his extraordinary act and said: 'He is really *Bhishma* (the terrible).' Santanu, greatly pleased, bestowed upon the high-souled prince the boon of death at will, saying: 'Death shall never approach thee as long as thou desirest to live.'

Vaisampayana said: "There was born of Satyavati a heroic son, a warrior and lord of men, named Chitrangada. Santanu also had another son named Vichitravirya. When Santanu ascended to heaven, Bhishma, placing himself under the command of Satyavati, installed Chitrangada on the throne. That prince soon vanquished all monarchs by his prowess and considered no man his equal. But the powerful king of the *Gandharvas* sought him in battle, and there occurred on the field of Kurukshetra, on the banks of the Saraswati, a fierce combat in which the *Gandharva* who was superior in strategy slew the Kuru prince.

After Chitrangada was slain, his successor Vichitravirya being a minor, Bhishma ruled the kingdom, placing himself under the command of Satyavati. When his brother attained majority, Bhishma took up the question of his marriage. He had heard that the three daughters of the king of Kasi, all equal in beauty to the *Apsaras* themselves, were to be married on the same occasion at a Swayamvara. Then that foremost of car-warriors, at the command of his mother, went to the city of Varanasi in a single chariot and saw that innumerable monarchs had gathered there from all parts. When the assembled kings were each being mentioned by name, Bhishma chose those maidens on behalf of his brother. And taking them into his chariot, Bhishma, that first of smiters in battle, addressed the kings, O monarch, in a voice deep as the roar of the clouds: 'The sages have said that that wife is dearly to be prized who is taken away by force, after slaying one's opponents in combat, from amid the concourse of princes and kings invited to a Swayamvara. Therefore, ye monarchs, I bear away these maidens hence by force. Strive ye, to the best of your might, to vanquish me or be vanquished. Ye monarchs, I stand here resolved to fight.'

Then, O Bharata, occurred the terrible encounter between those innumerable monarchs on one side and the lone Kuru warrior on the other.

After defeating those monarchs, Bhishma set out with the damsels for Hastinapura. And when everything relating to the wedding had been settled by Bhishma in consultation with Satyawati, the eldest daughter of the king of Kasi, smiling softly said: 'My heart hath already chosen the king of Saubha as its lord and this had also the approval of my father. At the Swayamwara I would have only chosen him for my husband. Knowing this, O thou who art conversant with all the rules of conduct, do what is proper. Having consulted Brahmanas proficient in the *Vedas*, he permitted her to do as she liked and bestowed with due rites the other two daughters, Ambika and Ambalika, on his younger brother Vichitravirya. The prince passed seven years happily with his wives. He was attacked, while yet in the prime of youth, with phthisis, and in spite of all efforts the Kuru prince died, setting like the evening sun.

Vaisampayana said: "The unfortunate Satyawati was plunged in grief at the loss of her son and, after performing with her daughters-in-law the obsequies of the deceased, she said to Bhishma: 'The perpetuation of the line of the virtuous and celebrated Santanu of Kuru's race now depends on thee. O virtuous one, thou art well acquainted, in detail and in the abstract, with the dictates of Dharma, with the various *Srutis*, and with all the branches of the *Vedas*. Thou art equal unto Sukra and Angiras in devotion to duty, resourcefulness and knowledge of the particular customs of families. My son and thy brother, endued with might and dear unto thee, hath gone childless to heaven while still a youth. These wives of thy brother, the amiable daughters of the ruler of Kasi, possessing beauty and youth, are desirous of children. Therefore, O thou of mighty arms, have children by them for the perpetuation of our line. Instal thyself on the throne and rule the kingdom of the Bharatas. Wed thou duly a wife. Plunge not thy ancestors into hell.'

Thus addressed by his mother, friends and relatives, the virtuous Bhishma gave this reply in conformity with

righteousness: 'Mother, what thou sayest is no doubt in accord with *Dharma*. But thou knowest what my vow is in the matter of having children. Thou knowest also all that transpired in connection with thy dower. I repeat the pledge I once gave: I will renounce the three worlds, the empire of heaven or anything that may be greater than that, but truth I will never renounce. Earth may renounce its scent; water its moisture; light its attribute of exhibiting forms; air its attribute of being felt by the touch; the sun his glory; fire its heat; the moon his cool rays; space its capacity of transmitting sound; and the god of justice his impartiality; but I cannot renounce truth.'

'O Queen, turn not thy eyes away from truth. Destroy us not. Breach of truth by a Kshatriya is never looked upon with favour in our scriptures.' "

DHRITHARASHTRA, PANDU AND VIDURA

Vaisampayana continued: "Satyavati then said to Bhishma in a voice broken by bashfulness: 'Because of my trust in thee I shall now indicate the means of continuing our line. There lives a son born of me in my maidenhood. He hath become a great *Rishi* and is known by the name of Dwaipayana. Charged by me, that sage of incomparable splendour will give issue to the wives of thy brother.' At the mention of that great *Rishi*, Bhishma with folded hands said, 'What has been said by thee is consistent with virtue and hath my full approval.'

Thus were born Dhritharashtra, Pandu and Vidura, those continuers of the Kuru race, like unto the children of the gods in splendour.

They were from their birth brought up by Bhishma as if they were his own children, and they grew up into fine youths learned in the *Vedas* and skilled in archery, in horsemanship, in encounters with mace, sword and shield, in the management of elephants in battle, and in the science of morality. And Pandu, possessed of great prowess, excelled all men in the science of the bow, while Dhritharashtra excelled all in

personal strength; and in the three worlds there was no one equal to Vidura in devotion to virtue and in wisdom. Beholding the restoration of the extinct line of Santanu, the saying became current in all countries that, among mothers of heroes, the daughters of the king of Kasi were the first; among countries, Kurujangala was the first; among virtuous men, Vidura was the first; and that among cities Hastinapura was the first. Pandu became king, as Dhritharashtra, owing to his blindness, and Vidura, on account of his being born of a Sudra woman, obtained not the kingdom. One day Bhishma said to Vidura:

‘This celebrated race of ours, resplendent with every virtue and accomplishment, hath all along held sovereignty over all other monarchs on Earth. It behoveth us to take such steps that our dynasty may expand again as the sea. There are three maidens worthy of being allied to our house. One is the daughter of (Surasena of) the Yadava race; the other is the daughter of Suvala; and the third is the princess of Madra. Well-born and beautiful, they are eminently fit for an alliance with our family. Tell me what thou thinkest.’ Thus addressed, Vidura replied: ‘Thou art both our father and mother. Thou art our respected spiritual instructor. Therefore, do thou that which thou deemest best for us.’

Soon after, Bhishma heard from the Brahmanas that Gandhari, the amiable daughter of Suvala, having worshipped Hara (Siva) had obtained from that diety a boon that she would have a hundred sons. Bhishma sent messengers unto the king of Gandhara proposing Dhritharashtra’s marriage with Gandhari. King Suvala hesitated at first on account of the blindness of the bridegroom; but taking into consideration the blood of the Kurus, their fame and conduct, he eventually gave his virtuous daughter unto Dhritharashtra. And the chaste Gandhari, hearing that Dhritharashtra was blind and that her parents had consented to wed her to him, out of love and respect for her future husband, kept her own eyes covered with cloth. And she gratified all the Kurus by her behaviour and respectful

attention. Ever devoted to her husband, she never referred, even by words, to other men.

Vaisampayana continued: "There was amongst the Yadavas a chief named Sura. He was the father of Vasudeva and had a daughter called Pritha who in beauty was unrivalled on Earth. Sura, always truthful in speech, gave her as an adoptive daughter unto his childless cousin and friend, the illustrious Kuntibhoja—the son of his paternal aunt—pursuant to a former promise. And Pritha engaged herself, in the house of her adoptive father, in looking after the duties of hospitality to Brahmanas and other guests. Once, she gratified by her attentions the terrible Brahmana known by the name of Durvasa. The sage, anticipating, by divine prescience, the distress in store for her (consequent upon the curse to be pronounced upon Pandu for his unrighteous act of slaying a deer while sporting with its mate), imparted to her an invocation for summoning any of the celestials she liked for giving her children. The amiable Kunti (Pritha) became curious, and while still a maiden summoned the god Arka (Sun).

*There was then born to her a son resembling a very god and known all over the world as Karna, encased in natural armour and with face brightened by ear-rings. And, after the birth of this child, the illustrious Tapana granted unto Pritha her maidenhood and ascended to heaven. Fearing the censure of her relatives she resolved to conceal the evidence of her folly, and, therefore, she decided to cast her offspring into the water. With tears in her eyes, she placed the infant in a basket smeared over with wax, and, carrying it to the river Aswa, consigned it to its waters with the following benediction:

'My child, may good betide thee at the hands of all that live on land, in the water, the sky, and the celestial regions. May thy course be ever auspicious and thy path free from obstacles. And, O son, may all that meet thee be kindly disposed to thee. May the lord of waters, Varuna, guard

* A portion of this is taken from Vana Parva.

thee in water; the deity that rangeth the skies protect thee in the sky; and, O son, may Surya, thy father by whose grace I have obtained thee as ordained by Destiny, protect thee everywhere. And may the Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Sadhyas, Viswadevas, Maruts, the cardinal points with the great Indra and the regents presiding over them, and, indeed, all the celestials take care of thee in weal or woe. Blessed is the woman who will, O thou that art born of a god, give thee suck and adopt thee for her son—thee that art radiant like the Sun, thee that hast large eyes like unto a lotus, a complexion bright as the petals of red lotus, a fair forehead and beautiful curly hair. O son, she is surely blest that will behold thee crawl on the ground, begrimed with dust, and sweetly lisping inarticulate words. And lucky, indeed, is she that will see thee reach thy manhood like a maned lion born in Himalayan forests.'

O King, having thus bewailed long and piteously, Pritha laid the basket on the waters of the river. She lingered a while longingly, but at last returned to the palace lest her father should notice her absence and come to know of what happened.

And it came to pass that, about this time, a Suta named Adhiratha, a friend of Dhritharashtra, came to the river accompanied by his wife Radha. Noticing a basket drifting along the current she had it brought and opened. And great was their astonishment when they beheld therein an infant like unto the morning sun in all its glory. Holding it in his lap, Adhiratha said to his wife: 'Never before have I seen such a wonder. This child must be of celestial birth. Sonless as I am, surely it is the gods that have graciously sent this unto me.' And they brought him up as their own son. They bestowed on him the name of Vasusena (born with wealth), because he was born with natural armour and ear-rings. In due course Adhiratha sent him to Hastinapura where he learnt the science of arms from Drona and also became the friend of Duryodhana. Having acquired the four kinds of weapons from Drona, Kripa and Rama he

became famous as a mighty bowman. Gifted with great energy he would adore the sun until his back was heated by its rays (from dawn to midday); and when at worship there was nothing on earth that the heroic and intelligent Vasusena would not give away unto the Brahmanas.

Once, Surya (Sun God) appeared to him in a dream and said: 'O son, listen to these words of mine. Out of affection for thee I tell thee what is for thy great good. Knowing thy world-wide reputation for charity and desirous of benefiting his own son, Phalgunas (Arjuna), Indra may come to thee disguised as a Brahmana and beg of thee thy ear-rings and coat of mail. It behoveth thee not to give them away. Arrayed in thy mail and ear-rings thou canst never be slain in battle.'

Vasusena replied: 'May it please thee, O bestower of boons, if I am dear to thee, dissuade me not from observing my vow. If Sakra asketh of me, ready am I to give him my ear-rings and mail so that my name may not suffer. Indeed, for the sake of fame I am prepared to sacrifice life itself. Fame sustaineth men in this world even as a mother nourisheth her children, while infamy killeth them though their bodies may remain whole.'

Accordingly, when asked by Indra, Karna ripped them off his body and joining his hands in reverence gave them unto Indra. The chief of the celestials accepted the gift and was exceedingly gratified with Karna's liberality. He, therefore, gave unto him a powerful dart, saying: 'This dart will surely kill that one (and *one* only) among the celestials, the *Asuras*, men, the *Gandharvas*, the *Nagas*, and the *Rakshasas*, whom thou desirest to conquer. But if thou hurlest it when thy life is not in imminent peril it will fall even on thyself?'

The son of Surya was before this known by the name of Vasusena. But since he cut off his natural armour he came to be called *Karna* (*the cutter* or *peeler* of his own cover).

Vaisampayana continued: "The large-eyed daughter of Kuntibhoja was gifted with beauty and every accomplishment. Though blessed with beauty, youth and every womanly

attribute, it so happened that no king had asked for her hand. Her father Kuntibhoja then invited the princes and kings of other countries and desired his daughter to choose a husband from among his guests. The intelligent Kunti entering the amphitheatre beheld Pandu, the foremost of the Bharatas, in that concourse of crowned heads. Proud as the lion, broad-chested, bull-eyed, with great strength and outshining in splendour all other monarchs, he looked like another Indra in that royal assemblage. Advancing with modesty, and quivering with emotion all the while, she placed the nuptial garland round Pandu's neck.

"Some time after, Bhishma decided upon marrying Pandu to a second wife. Then, on an auspicious day and moment as indicated by the wise for the ceremony, King Pandu was duly united with Madri. Living thus in happiness for thirty days, the Kuru king set out from his capital for the conquest of the world. And Pandu, like unto a mighty fire whose far-reaching flames were represented by his arrows and splendour by his weapons, began to consume all the kings that came in contact with him. Thus vanquished by him, all the kings of the world regarded him as the one and only hero on Earth, even as the celestials regard Indra in heaven. They waited on him with presents of various kinds of precious stones, pearl and corals, gold and silver, excellent kine, beautiful horses, fine cars and elephants, asses, camels, buffaloes, goats, sheep, blankets, beautiful hides and carpets made of the skin of the Banku deer. Accepting those gifts the king returned to his capital to the great delight of his subjects who all began to say: 'The fame of the achievements of Santanu and of the wise Bharata that was about to die hath been revived by Pandu. They who robbed the Kurus before of both territory and wealth have been subjugated and made to pay tribute by Pandu—the tiger of Hastinapura.'

Pandu then, at the command of Dhritharashtra, offered the wealth he had acquired by the prowess of his arms to Bhishma, their grandmother Satyawati and their mothers.

He gave a portion of his wealth to Vidura also. And, with the wealth acquired by that hero, Dhritharashtra performed five great sacrifices that were equal unto a hundred great horse-sacrifices.

A little while after, Pandu, who had achieved victory over sloth and lethargy, accompanied by his two wives Kunti and Madri, retired into the woods."

THE BIRTH OF THE KAURAVAS

Vaisampayana said: "O Janamejaya Dhritharashtra had by Gandhari a hundred sons; and Pandu had, by his two wives, Kunti and Madri, five sons who were great charioteers."

Janamejaya said: "O best of Brahmanas, how did *Gandhari* bring forth hundred sons and in how many years? How also were the five sons of Pandu, those mighty charioteers, born even though Pandu himself laboured under the curse of the great *Rishi*?"

Vaisampayana said: "One day Gandhari entertained with respectful attention the great Dwaipayana who came to her abode exhausted with hunger and fatigue. Gratified with Gandhari's hospitality, the *Rishi* gave her the boon she asked, namely, that she should have a hundred sons, each equal unto her lord in strength and accomplishments. Some time after Gandhari conceived; and when she had borne the burden in her womb for two long years without being delivered she heard that Kunti had brought forth a son like unto the morning sun in splendour. Disappointed that the period of gestation should be so long in her own case, and her mind unhinged by grief, she struck her womb with great violence; and there came forth from her womb a hard mass of flesh like unto an iron-ball. When she was about to throw it away, Dwaipayana, sensing everything by his spiritual powers, promptly came there and asked: 'What has thou done?' Gandhari making no attempt to hide her feelings said to the *Rishi*: 'Hearing that Kunti had brought forth a son like unto *Surya* himself

in splendour I struck in grief at my womb. Thou, hadst, O *Rishi*, granted me the boon that I should have a hundred sons. But here is only a ball of flesh instead of those hundred sons !' Vyasa then said: 'Daughter of Suvala, it is even so. But my words can never be futile. Let a hundred pots full of clarified butter be brought instantly, and let them be placed in a concealed spot. In the meantime, let cool water be sprinkled on this ball of flesh.'

Vaisampayana continued: "That ball of flesh became in time divided into a hundred and one parts, each about the size of the thumb. These were then put into the pots full of clarified butter that had been placed at a concealed spot and were watched with care. The illustrious Vyasa then instructed the daughter of Suvala that she should open the covers of the pots after full two years.

Then, in time, King Duryodhana was born from out of one of those pieces of the ball of flesh that had been deposited in the pots. In the order of birth, Yudhishtira (the son of Pandu) was the eldest. The day on which the haughty Duryodhana was born was also the birthday of Bhima of mighty arms and great prowess.

As soon as Duryodhana was born, he began to cry and bray like an ass. Hearing the sound, asses, vultures, jackals, and crows uttered their respective cries responsively. Violent winds began to blow, and there were fires in various directions. Alarmed at this, King Dhritrashtra summoning together Bhishma, Vidura, other well-wishers, all the Kurus, and numberless Brahmans said: 'The eldest of the princes, Yudhishtira, is the perpetuator of our line. By virtue of his birth he acquireth the kingdom. We have nothing to say to this. This my son is however born after him; can he become king? Tell me truly what is lawful and right in these circumstances.' As soon as these words were spoken, O Bharata, jackals and other carnivorous animals began to howl ominously. And marking the ill-omens all around, the assembled Brahmanas and the wise Vidura replied: 'O king, in view of these frightful omens at the birth of thy

eldest son it is evident that he will be the exterminator of thy race. The prosperity of all dependeth on abandoning him. Calamity there must be in keeping him. If thou abandonest him, there will yet remain for thee nine and ninety sons. If thou desirest the good of thy race, abandon him. Do good to the world and thy own race by casting off this one child of thine. It hath been said that an individual should be cast off for the sake of a family; that a family should be cast off for the sake of a village; that a village may be abandoned for the sake of the whole country; and that the Earth itself may be abandoned for the sake of the soul.' But King Dhritharashtra had not the heart to follow their advice. Then, within a month, were born a full hundred sons unto Dhritharashtra and a daughter also over and above this hundred."

THE BIRTH OF THE PANDAVAS

Janamejaya said: "Thou hast recited all about the extraordinary birth, among men, of the sons of Dhritharashtra in consequence of the *Rishi's* grace. Tell me now all about the Pandavas."

Vaisampayana said: "O king, one day Pandu, while roaming about in the woods (on the southern slopes of Himavat) that teemed with deer and wild animals of fierce disposition, saw a large deer, that seemed to be the leader of a herd, sporting with his mate. Beholding the animals, the monarch pierced them both with five of his sharp and swift arrows winged with golden feathers. But, O monarch, it was no deer that Pandu struck, but a *Rishi's* son of great ascetic merit who was with his mate in the form of a deer. Pierced by Pandu's shafts he fell uttering cries of agony in a voice like that of a man.

The deer then addressing Pandu said: 'What a vicious thing thou hast done, O best of men, in killing me who has done thee no wrong ! I am a *Muni* that liveth on fruits and roots, though disguised as a deer. I was living in the woods

at peace with all. Yet thou hast killed me, for which I will surely curse thee. Death shall certainly overtake thee as soon as thou feelest the influence of love. And that wife of thine with whom thou mayst be united at the time of thy death shall also follow thee with affection and reverence to the domains of the king of the dead. Thou hast brought me grief while I was happy. So shall grief come to thee while thou art happy.'

King Pandu with his wives was deeply afflicted and wept bitterly. With a sigh he looked at his two wives, Kunti and Madri, and addressing them said: 'Let the princess of Kosala (my mother), Vidura, the king, the venerable Satyavati, Bhishma, the priests of our family, illustrious *Soma*-drinking Brahmanas of rigid vows, all elderly citizens depending on us and our friends be informed that Pandu hath retired into the woods to lead a life of asceticism.' Hearing these words of their lord, both Kunti and Madri addressed him in these words: 'We also, in the company of our lord and for his benefit, controlling our passions and bidding farewell to all luxuries, shall subject ourselves to the severest austerities.'

Pandu replied: 'If, indeed, this your resolve springeth from virtue, then with you both I shall follow the imperishable path of my fathers. Abandoning the luxuries of cities and towns, dressed in barks of trees, and living on fruits and roots, I shall wander in the deep woods, practising the severest of penances. Bathing morning and evening I shall perform the *homa*. I shall reduce my body by eating very sparingly, wear rags and skins and keep knotted locks on my head. Living in solitude I shall give myself up to contemplation; I shall offer oblations to the *Pitris* and the gods with speech, water and the fruits of the wilderness; I shall not see, far less harm, any of the dwellers of the woods, or any of my relatives, or any of the inhabitants of cities and towns. Until I lay down this body I shall thus practise the severe ordinances of the *Vanaprastha* scriptures, always searching for severer ones that they may contain.'

Vaisampayana said: "Pandu then devoted himself to ascetism. Within a short time, he became the favourite of the whole body of *Siddhas* and *Charanas* residing there. On a certain day of the new moon, the great *Rishis* of rigid vows assembled together and, desirous of beholding Brahman, were on the point of starting on their expedition.

Pandu said to them: 'Ye fortunate ones, it is said that for the sonless there is no admittance into heaven. I am sonless. In affliction I speak unto you. I have duly discharged my obligations to the *Rishis*, the gods and men. But, ye ascetics, I am not yet freed from the debt I owe to my (deceased) ancestors.'

The *Rishis* answered: 'O king of virtuous soul, progeny awaits thee, that is sinless and blest with good fortune and like unto the gods. We behold it all with our prophetic eyes.'

Hearing these words of the ascetics, Pandu began to reflect deeply; and calling his wedded wife, the excellent Kunti, unto him he told her in confidence: 'Strive thou to raise offspring at this time of distress.'

"Thus addressed by Pandu, the handsome Kunti, ever attentive to what was agreeable and beneficial to her lord, replied saying: 'As a girl, O lord, in my father's house I used to attend upon the guests. One day I gratified with my attentions that Brahmana whom people call Durvasa. Pleased with my services, that Brahmana gave me a boon in the form of a *mantra* (formula of invocation). Commanded by thee, O royal sage, I can by means of that *mantra* invoke any of the celestials to give us good children. Methinks the time for its use has come.'

Hearing this Pandu replied: 'O handsome one, strive duly this very day to gratify our wishes.'

Vaisampayana continued: "O Janamejaya, when Gandhari's conception had been a full year old, it was then that Kunti invoked the eternal god of justice for obtaining offspring. She offered, without loss of time, sacrifices unto the god and began duly to repeat the formula that Durvasa

had imparted to her. When the child was born, an incorporeal voice said: 'This child shall be the best of men, the foremost of those that are virtuous. And this first child of Pandu shall be known by the name of Yudhishtira. He shall be a famous king, known throughout the three worlds.'

Pandu, having obtained that virtuous son, said again to his wife: 'The wise have declared that a Kshatriya must be endued with physical strength, otherwise he is no Kshatriya. Therefore, ask thou for an offspring of superior strength. Thus commanded by her lord, Kunti then invoked Vayu. And upon the birth of that child endued with extraordinary strength, an incorporeal voice, as before, said: 'This child shall be the foremost of all endued with strength.' I must tell you, O Bharata, of a wonderful incident that occurred after the birth of Vrikodara (Bhima). Once he fell from the lap of his mother, and the violence of the fall broke into fragments the stone upon which he fell without his infant body being injured in the least.

After the birth of Vrikodara, Pandu again began to think: 'How shall I obtain a very superior son who would achieve world-wide fame? Everything in the world dependeth on Destiny and exertion. But Destiny can never be successful except by timely exertion. It is said that Indra is the chief of the gods. Gratifying him with my asceticism, I shall obtain from him a son of great prowess.'

Taking counsel with the great *Rishis*, Pandu commanded Kunti to observe an auspicious vow for one full year, while he himself commenced, O Bharata, to stand upon one leg from morning till evening and practise other severe austerities, with mind rapt in meditation, for gratifying the lord of the celestials.

It was after a long time that Indra (gratified with his devotion) appeared before Pandu and, addressing him, said: 'I shall give thee, O king, a son who will be celebrated all over the three worlds and who will promote the welfare of Brahmanas, kine and all honest men.'

The celebrated Kunti then invoked Sakra (the king of gods) and gave birth to Arjuna. And as soon as this child was born, an incorporeal voice, loud and deep as that of the clouds, distinctly said in the hearing of every creature dwelling in that asylum: 'This child of thine, O Kunti, will be equal unto Kartyavirya in energy and Siva in prowess. Invincible like Sakra himself, he will spread thy fame far and wide. As Vishnu (the youngest of Aditi's sons) enhanced Aditi's joy, so shall this child enhance thy joy.'

And hearing those words uttered so loudly, the ascetics dwelling on the mountain of hundred peaks and the celestials with Indra sitting in their cars became exceedingly glad. The sounds of the (invisible) Drum filled the entire welkin. There were shouts of joy and the whole region was covered with flowers showered down from the heavens. The celestials, assembled together, offered their respectful adorations to the son of Pritha. The seven great *Rishis*, namely, Bharadwaja, Kasyapa, Gautama, Viswamitra, Jamadagni, Vasishtha, and the illustrious Atri, who illumined the world of old when the Sun was lost, all came there. The various tribes of *Apsaras*, decked with celestial garlands, be-jewelled, and attired in fine robes, came there and danced in joy, chanting the praise of Bibhatsu (Arjuna). All around, the great *Rishis* began to utter propitiatory blessings.

After the birth of Kunti's sons and the hundred sons of Dhritharashtra, the daughter of the king of the Madras said in confidence to Pandu: 'O slayer of foes, I should be loth to complain even if thou art ungracious to me. I do not grieve that Gandhari hath obtained a hundred sons. This, however, is my great grief that while I and Kunti are equal, I should be childless and that it should so chance that thou shouldst have offspring by Kunti alone. If the daughter of Kuntibhoja could so manage that I should have offspring, she would be really doing me a great favour. But as she is my rival, I feel some delicacy in soliciting any favour of her. If thou beest, O king, propitiously inclined to me, then ask her to grant my desire.'

Kunti readily complied and said unto Madri: 'Think thou, without loss of time, of some celestial, and thou shalt certainly obtain from him a child like unto him.' Reflecting for a few moments, Madri thought of the twin Aswins and had two twin sons unrivalled on Earth for personal beauty. And as soon as they were born an incorporeal voice said: 'These twins shall transcend even the twin Aswins themselves in energy and beauty.' Indeed, possessed of great energy and beauty, they illumined the whole region.

When the children were born, the *Rishis*, dwelling on the mountain of hundred peaks, uttered blessings on them and affectionately performed the first rites of birth and bestowed appellations on them. The eldest of Kunti's children was called Yudhishtira, the second Bhimasena, and the third Arjuna; and of Madri's sons, the first-born of the twins was called Nakula and the next Sahadeva.

Some time after, Pandu again requested Kunti on behalf of Madri to which Kunti replied: 'Having given her the formula of invocation only once, she hath, O king, managed to obtain two sons. Have I not been thus deceived by her? I fear that she will soon surpass me in the number of children. This, indeed, is the way of all wicked women! Fool that I was, I did not know that by invoking the twin gods I could obtain at one time twin children. I beseech thee, O king, do not press me any further'."

THE DEATH OF PANDU

Vaisampayana said: "Beholding his five handsome sons growing up before him in that great forest on the charming mountain slope, Pandu felt the lost might of his arms revive once more. One day, in the season of spring which intoxicates every creature, the king accompanied by his wife (Madri) began to rove in the woods where every tree had put forth new blossoms. He beheld all around *Palasas*, *Tilakas*, *Mangoes*, *Champakas*, *Parihadrakas*, *Karnikaras*, *Asokas*, *Kesaras*, *Atimuktas* and *Kuruvakas* with swarms of maddened

bees sweetly humming about. There were blossoming *Pari-jatas* with the *Kokila* pouring forth his melodies from under every twig echoing with the sweet hum of the black bees. And he beheld also various other kinds of trees bent down with the weight of their flowers and fruits. There were, besides, many pretty lakes covered with hundreds of fragrant lotuses. At the sight of all this vernal splendour, Pandu felt the soft influence of love. Roving like a celestial with a light heart amidst such scenery, alone with his wife Madri who was dressed in semi-transparent attire, the king's passion flamed up like a forest fire. Unrestrained by the fear of the *Rishi's* curse and impelled by fate, the monarch, overpowered by passion, forcibly sought the embraces of Madri. And the Kuru king Pandu, of virtuous soul, thus succumbed to the inevitable influence of time.

Then Madri began to weep aloud. Kunti with her sons and the twins of Madri, hearing those cries of grief, hurried to the spot, and beholding both Pandu and Madri she was overwhelmed with grief.

Kunti then spake: 'I am the elder of his wedded wives; the chief religious merit must be mine. Therefore, O Madri, I must follow our lord to the region of the dead. Rear thou these children.' But Madri said: 'I shall follow him. Thou art my elder sister; let me have thy permission. O revered one, if I survive thee, I am certain I shall not be able to rear thy children as if they were mine. Would not sin touch me on that account? But, thou, O Kunti, wilt be able to bring up my sons as if they were thine.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Having said this, the daughter of the king of the Madras ascended the funeral pyre of her lord."

Then those godlike *Rishis* of magnanimous hearts resolved to go to Hastinapura with Pandu's children and place them in the hands of Bhishma and Dhritrashtra. Arriving at Kurujangala within a short time, the ascetics charged the porters to inform the king of their arrival. And the citizens of Hastinapura, hearing of the visit of thousands

of *Charanas* and *Munis*, were filled with wonder. They came out in large numbers with their wives and children to behold those ascetics. And there also came to meet them Bhishma, Somadatta, the royal sage Dhritharashtra, Vidura himself, the venerable Satyavati, the illustrious princes of Kosala and Gandhari accompanied by other ladies of the royal household. And the hundred sons of Dhritharashtra also were there. The vast assemblage was deeply moved and every heart then was inclined to piety (love and charity).

Young and old, all the citizens grieved for the sons of King Pandu and passed twelve days in mourning with the weeping Pandavas."

THE RIVALRY

Vaisampayana said: "When the *Sraddha* of the deceased monarch was finished, the venerable Vyasa, seeing all the subjects sunk in grief, said one day to his mother Satyavati: 'Mother, our days of happiness are fled and those of suffering have succeeded. Sin beginneth to increase day by day. The world hath got old. The empire of the Kauravas will no longer endure because of wrong and oppression. Go thou then into the forest and devote thyself to contemplation through *Yoga*. Henceforth, society will be full of deceit and wrong. Good work will cease. Do not witness the annihilation of thy race in thy old age.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Then the sons of Pandu, having gone through all the purifying rites prescribed in the *Vedas*, began to grow up in princely style in the home of their father. Whenever they were engaged in play with the sons of Dhritharashtra their superiority became marked. In speed, in striking objects aimed at, in consuming food, and scattering dust, Bhimasena beat all the sons of Dhritharashtra. That son of the Wind-god pulled them by the hair and made them fight with one another, laughing all the while. And Vrikodara easily defeated those hundred and one children of great energy, as if they were one instead of being a

hundred and one. When the sons of Dhritharashtra climbed the boughs of a tree for plucking fruits, Bhima would shake it with his foot, and down would come the fruits and the fruit-pluckers at the same time. In fact, those princes were no match for Bhima in pugilistic encounters, in speed, or in skill.

Seeing these wonderful exhibitions of the might of Bhima, the powerful Duryodhana, the eldest son of Dhritharashtra, became jealous of him. He thought: 'There is none to compare with Bhima in point of prowess. I must destroy him by artifice. Singly, Bhima dares a century of us to combat. Therefore, when he is sleeping in the garden, I shall throw him into the current of the Ganga. Then, confining his eldest brother Yudhishtira and his younger brother Arjuna, I can rule as the sole monarch without molestation.' Having determined thus, the wicked Duryodhana was ever on the watch for an opportunity for injuring Bhima. At last, at a beautiful spot on the banks of the Ganga, he built a palace and filled it with all kinds of entertaining things and choice viands. Then the evil-minded prince suggested unto the Pandavas: 'Let us all go to the banks of the Ganga, graced with trees and crowned with flowers, and sport there in the water.'

On arriving there, the princes dismissed their attendants and, surveying the beauty of the gardens and the groves, entered the palace like lions entering their mountain caves. The Kauravas and the Pandavas sat down and began to enjoy the things provided for them. They began playfully to exchange morsels of food with one another. Meanwhile, the wicked Duryodhana had mixed a powerful poison with a quantity of food, with the object of making away with Bhima. Then they all went to play in the water. The powerful second Pandava felt very fatigued and, getting out of the water, he lay down on the ground. He was weary and under the influence of the poison; and the cool air served to spread the poison all over his frame, so that he lost his senses at once. Seeing this, Duryodhana bound

him with chords of shrubs and threw him into the water. The unconscious son of Pandu sank down till he reached the *Naga* kingdom. The *Nagas*, having fangs containing virulent venom, bit him by thousands; and the vegetable poison already in the blood of the son of the Wind-god was neutralised by the snake-poison.

On regaining consciousness, the son of Kunti burst his bands and began to press the snakes down under the ground. A remnant fled for life and reported to their king Vasuki.

Then Vasuki went to the spot and met Bhimasena. Among the serpents, there was one, named Aryaka. He was the great grandfather of Kunti. The lord of serpents seeing his relative embraced him. Then, Vasuki, learning all, was pleased with Bhima.

And Aryaka said: 'O king of serpents, permit him to drink of your *rasakunda* (nectar-vessels) and thus acquire immeasurable strength. There is the strength of a thousand elephants in each one of those vessels. Let this prince drink as much as he can.'

At one draught Bhimasena quaffed a whole vessel, and in this manner drained off eight successive jars till he was full. The serpents had prepared an excellent bed for him, on which he lay down at ease.

Bhimasena awoke from that slumber on the eighth day feeling strong beyond measure as a result of the nectar he had drunk having been all digested. Seeing him awake, the *Nagas* began to console and cheer him, saying: 'O thou of mighty arms, the strength-giving liquor thou hast drunk will give thee the might of ten thousand elephants. No one will now be able to vanquish thee in combat. Do thou bathe in this holy and auspicious water and return home. Thy brothers are disconsolate because of thee.'

The mighty Bhimasena rising to the surface of the Earth ran quickly to his mother. He related to his brothers all the villainy of Duryodhana and the lucky and unlucky incidents that had befallen him in the world of the serpents. Thereupon Yudhishtira said: 'Do thou observe silence

on this. Do not speak of this to any one. From this day, guard ye all one another with care.' Thus cautioned by the righteous Yudhishtira, they all became very vigilant from that day. And to ensure that there was no negligence on their part, Vidura was ever giving them sage advice.

When that terrible poison intended for the destruction of Bhima failed of effect, Duryodhana, Karna and Sakuni had recourse to numerous other devices for accomplishing the death of the Pandavas. Though every one of these attempts was fully known to the Pandavas, yet, in accordance with the advice of Vidura, they suppressed their indignation."

DRONA BECOMES TUTOR TO THE PRINCES

Vaisampayana said: "With a view to giving his grandsons an excellent education Bhishma was on the look-out for a teacher, energetic and well-skilled in the science of arms.

One day the heroic princes, going out of the city, began to play with a ball and roam about in sheer animal spirits. The ball with which they were playing fell into a well and all their efforts to recover it proved futile. Just then, they beheld a Brahmana of darkish hue, decrepit, lean and sanctified by the performance of the *Agnihotra*; and the princes who had despaired of success surrounded him immediately. Drona (for that Brahmana was no other), seeing the princes unsuccessful and conscious of his own skill, smiled a little and said: 'Shame on your Kshatriya might, and shame also on your skill in arms! Born in the race of Bharata how is it that ye cannot recover the ball (from the bottom of this well)? If ye promise me a dinner to-day, I will, with these blades of grass, bring up not only the ball ye have lost but this ring also that I now throw down. This handful of long grass I will invest, by my *mantras*, with the virtue of weapons. I will pierce the ball with one of these blades, and then pierce

that blade with another, and that another with a third, and thus shall I, forming a chain, bring up the ball.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Then Drona did exactly as he said. Taking a bow and an arrow he pierced the ring with the arrow and brought it up at once. Then taking the ring thus brought up from the well still pierced with his arrows, he calmly gave it to the astonished princes. The latter, seeing the ring thus recovered, said: 'We bow to thee, O Brahmana! None else owneth such skill. We long to know who thou art and whose son. What also can we do for thee?'

Thus addressed, Drona replied unto the princes: 'Repair ye unto Bhishma and describe to him my likeness and skill. The mighty one will recognize me.'

The princes repaired unto Bhishma and, telling him of the purport of the Brahmana's speech, related everything about his (extraordinary) feat. Bhishma at once guessed that the Brahmana could be none else than Drona; and thinking that he would make the best preceptor for the princes he went in person unto him and, welcoming him respectfully, brought him over to his house. Then he tactfully asked him the object of his visit to Hastinapura. Drona explained:

"Sir, in times past I went to the great *Rishi* Agnivesa in order to get weapons from him and also to learn the science of arms. Devoted to the service of my preceptor, I lived with him for many years in the humble guise of a *Brahmacharin* with matted locks on my head. At that time, with the same object, the prince of Panchala, the mighty Yajnasena, also lived in the same asylum. From our earliest years we studied together and, indeed, he was my friend from boyhood, always speaking and doing what was agreeable to me. He used to tell me: 'Drona, I am the favourite child of my illustrious father. When the king installeth me as monarch of the Panchalas, the kingdom shall be thine; friend, this, indeed, is my solemn promise. My dominion, wealth and happiness shall all be dependent on thee.' At last, the time

came for departure. I offered him my regards at the time, and, indeed, I remembered his words ever afterwards.

When I heard that he had been installed in the sovereignty of the Somakas I regarded myself as blest beyond measure. Joyfully I went unto that dear friend of mine seated on the throne, remembering my former friendship with him and also his own words to me. And, approaching Drupada, I said: 'O tiger among men, know me for thy friend.' Saying this, I approached him with the familiarity of a friend. But Drupada, laughing in derision, spurned me as if I were a vulgar fellow. He said: 'Thy intelligence scarcely seemeth to be of a high order, inasmuch as, approaching me suddenly, thou sayest thou art my friend. Time that impaireth everything impaireth friendship also. My former friendship with thee was for a particular purpose. One of impure birth can never be the friend of one who is of pure birth. One who is not a car-warrior can never be the friend of one who is such. Friendship can only subsist between persons of equal rank, but not between those that are unequally placed. Think not of it any longer. There cannot be friendship between a poor man and a rich man, between an unlettered hind and a man of letters, between a coward and a hero. Why dost thou, therefore, desire, the revival of our former friendship? One who is not a king can never have a king for his friend. I do not remember ever having promised thee my kingdom. But I can now give thee food and shelter for one night!' I left his presence immediately with my wife, vowing to do that which I will certainly do soon enough. Thus insulted by Drupada, I have been filled with wrath and I come to the Kurus desirous of obtaining intelligent and docile pupils. O, tell me what I am to do."

Vaisampayana continued: "Thus addressed by the son of Bharadwaja, Bhishma said unto him: 'String thy bow, Brahmana, and make the Kuru princes accomplished in arms. Thou art the absolute lord of whatever wealth the Kurus have and of their sovereignty and kingdom. The

Kurus are thine from this day. Think that as already accomplished which thy heart desireth.'

And that first of bowmen, Drona, thereupon joyfully accepted the Kauravas, namely the sons of Pandu and Dhritrashtra, as his pupils. One day Drona called them apart and, making them touch his feet, told them with a swelling heart: 'I have in my mind a particular purpose. Promise me truly, that, when ye have become skilled in arms, ye will accomplish it.' Hearing these words, the Kuru princes remained silent. But Arjuna, O king, vowed to accomplish it whatever it was. Drona, greatly pleased, clasped Arjuna to his bosom and smelt the scent of his head repeatedly, shedding tears of joy all the while.

And many other princes also flocked to that best of Brahmanas for instruction in arms. The Vrishnis and the Andhakas, princes from various lands, and the (adopted) son of Radha of the *Suta* caste (Karna), all became pupils of Drona. But of them all, the *Suta* child Karna, from jealousy, frequently defied Arjuna and, supported by Duryodhana, used to disregard the Pandavas. Arjuna always stood by the side of his preceptor; in skill, might and perseverance he excelled his fellow-students. Indeed, although the preceptor gave the same instruction to all, yet, in lightness and skill, Arjuna became the foremost of all his pupils. And Drona was convinced that none of his other pupils would at any time be a match for that son of Indra.

The strong-armed son of Pandu set his heart upon practising with his bow in the dark. And, O Bharata, Drona hearing the twang of his bowstring in the night came to him and clasping him said: 'Truly do I tell thee that I shall so train thee that there will be none equal to thee as a bowman in this world.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Thereafter Drona began to teach Arjuna the art of fighting on horseback, on the back of elephants, on car, and on the ground, with the mace, sword, lance, spear, and the dart. And he also instructed him in using many weapons and fighting with many men

at the same time. And hearing reports of his skill, kings and princes, desirous of learning the science of arms, flocked to Drona by thousands.

Two of Drona's pupils became great experts in the use of the mace. They were Duryodhana and Bhima, who were, however, always jealous of each other. Aswatthaman excelled everyone in the mysteries of the science of arms; the twins (Nakula and Sahadeva) in handling the sword; and Yudhishtira as a car-warrior. Arjuna, however, was supreme in every respect, surpassing everyone in intelligence, resourcefulness, strength and perseverance. Accomplished in all weapons, Arjuna became the foremost of even the foremost of car-warriors; and his fame spread all over the earth to the verge of the sea. And the wicked sons of Dhritharashtra, beholding Bhimasena endued with great strength and Arjuna accomplished in all arms, became very jealous of them.

In order to test the comparative excellence of all his pupils in the use of arms, one day Drona collected them all together. Before assembling them together, he had caused an artificial bird to be placed on the top of a neighbouring tree to serve as a target. And Drona said unto them: 'Take up your bows quickly and stand here taking aim at that bird on the tree, with arrows fixed on your bow strings. Shoot and cut off the bird's head as soon as I give the order. I shall give each of you a chance, my children.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Then Drona first asked Yudhishtira: 'Aim with thy arrow and shoot as soon as I give the order.' Yudhishtira took up the bow and stood aiming at the bird. Addressing the Kuru prince Drona said: 'Behold, O prince, that bird on the top of the tree.' Yudhishtira replied: 'I do.' The next moment, Drona asked him: 'What dost thou see now, prince? Seest thou the tree, myself or thy brothers?' Yudhishtira answered: 'I see the tree, thyself, my brothers and the bird.' Drona repeated his question, but was answered as often in the same words. Drona then, vexed with Yudhishtira, reproachingly

told him: 'Stand thou apart. It is not for thee to strike the target.'

Then Drona repeated the experiment with Duryodhana and the other sons of Dhritrashtra, one after another, as also with his other pupils, Bhima and the rest, including the princes that had come unto him from other lands. But the answer in every case was the same as Yudhishtira's, (*viz.*, We behold the tree, thyself, our fellow-pupils and the bird). And reproached by their preceptor, they were all ordered, one after another, to stand aside.

When they had all failed, Drona with a smile called Arjuna and said unto him: 'By thee the mark must be shot; therefore, turn thy eyes to it. Thou must let fly the arrow as soon as I give the order. Therefore, son, stand here with bow and arrow for a moment.' And with the bow bent Arjuna stood taking aim at the bird. Then Drona asked him as in the case of others: 'Seest thou, Arjuna, the bird there, the tree and myself?' Arjuna replied: 'I see the bird only, but not the tree or thyself.' Drona, well pleased with Arjuna's reply, asked him: 'If thou seest the vulture, then describe it to me.' Arjuna said: 'I see only the head of the vulture, not its body.' At these words of Arjuna, the hair on Drona's body stood on end from delight. He then said to Partha: 'Shoot.' And the latter instantly let fly his arrow and with his sharp shaft struck off the head of the vulture and brought it down to the ground. No sooner was the deed done than Drona clasped Phalguna to his bosom and imagined that Drupada with his friends were as good as vanquished."

THE TOURNAMENT

Vaisampayana said: "Seeing that the sons of Dhritrashtra and Pandu had become quite accomplished in arms, Drona approaching King Dhritrashtra said: 'O best of Kuru kings, thy children have completed their education. With thy permission, let them now give a display of their proficiency.' Hearing him, the king said with a joyful heart:

‘O best of Brahmanas, thou hast, indeed, accomplished a great task. Name thou the place, the time, where, when and the manner in which the trial may be held. Sorely grieved am I, and my blindness maketh me envy those who, blessed with sight, will behold my children’s prowess in arms.’

Drona then measured out a piece of land void of trees and thickets and furnished with wells and springs. And upon the spot of land so measured out, selecting a lunar day when the star ascendant was auspicious, he offered sacrifice unto the gods in the presence of the citizens assembled by proclamation to witness the same. Then, the artificers of the king built thereon a large and elegant stage according to the rules laid down in the scriptures, and it was furnished with weapons of every kind. An elegant hall was also provided for female spectators. And the citizens constructed many galleries, while the wealthier of them pitched many spacious and high tents all around.

When the day fixed for the tournament arrived, the king accompanied by his ministers, with Bhishma and that foremost of preceptors, Kripa, walking ahead, came unto that theatre of almost celestial beauty, constructed of pure gold and decked with strings of pearls and stones of *lapis lazuli*. And Gandhari, blessed with great good fortune, Kunti and other ladies of the royal household in gorgeous attire, accompanied by their waiting women, joyfully ascended the platform, like goddesses ascending the Sumeru mountain. And the four orders, the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and others, desirous of beholding the princes’ skill in arms, left the city and hastened to the spot. So eager was every one to behold the spectacle that a vast crowd assembled there in no time. What with the blowing of trumpets, the beating of drums and the sound of many voices, that vast concourse appeared like an agitated ocean.

At last, Drona accompanied by his son, dressed in white attire, with a white sacred thread, white locks, white beard, white garlands, and white sandal paste smeared over his body, entered the lists. It seemed as if the Moon himself

accompanied by the planet Mars appeared in an unclouded sky. On entering, Bharadwaja performed appropriate worship and directed Brahmanas versed in *mantras* to celebrate the auspicious rites. Auspicious and sweet-sounding musical instruments then struck up propitiatory music and several persons equipped with a variety of arms entered the arena. Then, girding up their loins, those mighty warriors, those foremost ones of Bharata's race (the princes) entered the lists armed with finger-protectors, bows, and quivers. With Yudhishtira at their head, the valiant princes appeared in order of age and began to give an exhibition of their wonderful skill with their weapons. Some of the spectators lowered their heads fearing the fall of arrows, while others fearlessly looked on with wonder. Riding on horses at great speed and manœuvring them dexterously, the princes began to hit marks with shafts engraved with their respective names. The prowess of the princes thrilled the spectators, and hundreds and thousands of people gaping in wonder would suddenly exclaim: 'Well done! Well done!' After repeatedly displaying their skill and dexterity in the use of bows and arrows and in the management of chariots, the mighty warriors took up their swords and bucklers and began to range the lists, wielding their weapons. The spectators were astonished at their agility, the symmetry of their bodies, their grace, their calmness, the firmness of their grasp and their skill in the use of sword and buckler.

Then Vrikodara and Suyodhana, those eternal rivals, appeared, mace in hand, like two single-peaked mountains. And those mighty-armed warriors braced their loins and summoning all their energy roared like two (elephants in rut) and careered right and left, circling the lists.

When the Kuru prince and Bhima, the strongest of men, entered the arena, the spectators, swayed by partisan feelings, began to take sides. Some cried: 'Behold the heroic king of the Kurus!' Some said, 'Behold Bhima'; and loud was the tumult. And seeing the place become like unto a troubled ocean, the intelligent Bharadwaja said unto his

dear son Aswathaman: 'Restrain both these mighty warriors so proficient in arms. Let not the ire of the assembly be provoked by this combat of Bhima and Duryodhana.'

Then the son of the preceptor of the princes restrained those combatants standing with uplifted maces and resembling two swollen oceans agitated by the winds that blow at the universal dissolution. Entering the arena himself Drona commanded the musicians to stop, and with a voice deep as that of the clouds addressed these words: 'Behold ye now that Partha who is dearer to me than my own son, the master of all arms, the son of Indra himself, and like unto the younger brother of Indra (Vishnu)!' And having performed the propitiatory rites, the youth Phalguna donning his golden mail and wearing the finger-protector (gauntlet), with the bow in his hand, and his quiver full of shafts, appeared in the lists even like an evening cloud reflecting the rays of the setting sun and illumined by the hues of the rainbow and flashes of lightning.

On seeing Arjuna, the whole assembly was delighted, and conchs were blown all around while other musical instruments were also played. And there was a great uproar, the spectators exclaiming, 'This is the glorious son of Kunti!' 'This is the middle (third) Pandava!' 'This is the son of the mighty Indra!' 'This is the protector of the Kurus!' 'This is the foremost of those versed in arms!' 'This is the foremost of all cherishers of virtue!' 'This is the most eminent of those who uphold righteousness'. At these (joyous) exclamations, the tears of Kunti, mixing with the milk of her breast, suffused her bosom. Hearing the applause Dhritharashtra was delighted and asked Vidura: 'O Kshatri, what is this great uproar for, like unto that of the troubled deep, arising all of a sudden and rending the very heavens?' Vidura replied: 'O mighty monarch, Phalguna, the son of Pandu and Pritha, arrayed in mail hath entered the lists; and hence this uproar'. Dhritharashtra said: 'O thou of soul so great, by the three (protective) fires (in the person of Yudhishtira, Bhima and Arjuna) sprung from Pritha who

is even like the sacred fuel, I am, indeed, blessed, favoured and protected.'

Vaisampayana continued: "When the spectators, excited with delight, became somewhat calm, Bibhatsu gave a display of his deftness in the use of weapons. By the *Agneya* weapon he created fire; and by the *Varuna* weapon he created water. By the *Vayavya* weapon he created air; and by the *Parjanya* weapon he created clouds. Land he made by the *Bhauma* weapon; and mountains by the *Parvatya* weapon. And by the *Antardhana* weapon they were all made to disappear. Now he appeared tall and now short; now he was seen on the yoke of his car, and now on the car itself; and the next moment he was on the ground. And like one shaft, he let fly into the mouth of a moving iron boar five shafts in quick succession from his bow-string. One and twenty arrows that hero discharged into the hollow of a cow's horn suspended by a rope. In this manner, Arjuna showed his profound skill in the use of the sword, bow and mace.

And, O Bharata, when the tournament had well-nigh ended, the excitement of the spectators had cooled and the orchestra had stopped playing, there were heard, in the direction of the gate, sounds of the slapping of arms, betokening might and strength, and even like unto the roar of the thunder. The assembled multitude wondered: 'Are the mountains splitting or is the Earth itself rending asunder, or is the welkin resounding with the roar of gathering clouds?'

"And to the astonishment of the spectators, Karna, in his natural mail and with face lit up by ear-rings, entered the spacious lists, like a walking cliff, holding a bow and carrying a sword girded to his waist. In splendour he resembled the Sun, in loveliness the Moon, and in energy the fire. Tall in stature like a golden palm tree and endued with the vigour of youth he was capable of slaying a lion. Handsome in features, he was possessed of countless accomplishments. Quickly surveying the arena, he bowed indifferently to Drona and Kripa. The entire assembly was dazed and wondered who he was. In a voice deep as thunder he

addressed his unknown brother: 'O Partha, I shall perform feats of arms before this gazing multitude, excelling what thou hast performed. Beholding them, thou shalt be amazed.' He had hardly finished speaking when the spectators stood up all at once, as if shot up by a machine. Duryodhana was filled with delight, while Bibhatsu was instantly all abashment and anger. Then, with the permission of Drona, the mighty Karna, delighting in battle, performed all that Partha had done before. And Duryodhana with his brothers thereupon embraced Karna in joy and said: 'Welcome O warrior of mighty arm! I have obtained thee by good fortune. Do thou with me enjoy the good things of life. Be thou the benefactor of thy friend, and, O represser of enemies, place thou thy feet on the heads of all foes.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Smarting under Karna's successful challenge, Arjuna said unto Karna: 'That fate which awaiteth the unwelcome intruder and the uninvited talker shall be thine, O Karna, for thou shalt be slain by me.' Karna retorted: 'This arena is open to all and is not meant for thee alone, O Phalguna! They are to be regarded as kings that excel in might; and, verily, might constitutes the warrior's code of conduct. But what need of speech which is the weapon of the weak! O B̥arata, speak then with arrows until with arrows I strike off thy head to-day before the preceptor himself.'

Quickly embraced by his brothers, Partha then, with the permission of Drona, advanced for the combat. On the other side, Karna, having been embraced by Duryodhana and his brothers, took up his bow and arrows and stood ready to fight. Then the firmament became overcast with clouds emitting flashes of lightning, and the coloured bow of Indra appeared shedding its effluent rays. Seeing Indra thus viewing the arena from affection for his son, the Sun too dispersed the clouds from over his own offspring (Karna); and Phalguna remained deep hid under cover of the clouds, while Karna remained visible, being surrounded by the rays of the Sun. The son of Dhritharashtra stood by the side of

Karna; and Bharadwaja, Kripa and Bhishma stood with Partha. And the assembly including the female spectators was divided in its loyalty. Knowing the truth, Kunti swooned away on seeing Karna. But with the help of female attendants, Vidura, versed in every lore, revived the insensible Kunti by sprinkling sandal paste and water on her. When she came to herself and saw her two sons clad in mail set for combat, Kunti was seized with fear, but she could do nothing to hold them back. Meanwhile, beholding the two warriors ready with bows strung in their hands, Kripa, conversant with the rules regulating duels, said to Karna: 'This son of Pandu, the youngest son of Kunti and the scion of the Kuru race, will engage in combat with thee. But O mighty-armed one, thou too must tell us thy lineage, the names of thy father and mother and the royal line of which thou art the ornament. Learning this, Partha will then fight with thee or not as he thinketh fit. Princes never fight with men of inglorious lineage.'

Thus addressed by Kripa, Karna's countenance became like unto a lotus, pale and torn with the pelting showers in the rainy season. But Duryodhana immediately said: 'If Phalguna is unwilling to fight with one who is not a king, I will forthwith make Karna king of Anga.'

Immediately, the mighty warrior Karna was installed king by Brahmanas versed in *mantras*; the royal umbrella was held over his head, while yak-tails waved around that redoubted hero of graceful mien. The cheers having ceased, King Karna said unto Duryodhana: 'O tiger among monarchs, what shall I give unto thee that can compare with thy gift of a kingdom? O king, I will do all thou biddest.' Suyodhana said: 'I long for thy friendship'; to which Karna replied: 'Be it so.' Then they warmly embraced each other.

Vaisampayana said: "Soon after this, with his cloak hanging loosely, Adhiratha (Karna's foster-father) entered the arena perspiring and trembling, and supporting himself on a staff.

Seeing him, Karna laid down his bow and, in filial reverence, with his head still wet with the water of inauguration, bowed to him. And the charioteer addressing Karna as his son embraced him and shed tears of affection on his head.

Seeing the charioteer, Bhimasena took Karna for a charioteer's son and said to him in derision: 'O son of a charioteer, thou art not worthy of being killed by Partha in combat. As befits thy tribe take thou anon the whip. And, meanest of men, nor art thou fit to preside over the kingdom of Anga, even as a dog doth not deserve the butter placed before the sacrificial fire.'

And even as a mad elephant riseth from an assemblage of lotus, so did the mighty Duryodhana rise in wrath from among his brothers; and addressing Bhimasena of terrible deeds standing there said: 'O Vrikodara, it is not meet that thou shouldst speak such words. Might is the cardinal virtue of a Kshatriya, and even a Kshatriya of inferior birth deserveth to be fought with. The lineage of heroes, like the sources of lordly rivers, is a thing difficult to know. The fire that covereth the whole world riseth from the waters. The thunder that slayeth the *Danavas* was made of a bone of (a mortal named) Dadhichi. The illustrious deity Guha, who combines in his composition the portions of all the other deities, is of lineage unknown. Some call him the offspring of Agni; some, of Krittika; some, of Rudra; and some, of Ganga. It hath been heard by us that persons born in the Kshatriya order have in the past become Brahmanas. Viswamitra and others (born Kshatriyas) have attained the eternal Brahma. The foremost of all wielders of weapons—the preceptor Drona—was born in a water-pot and Kripa of the race of Gotama hath sprung from a clump of heath. Your own births, ye Pandava princes, are known to me. Can a doe bring forth a tiger like Karna, equalling the splendour of the Sun, bearing every auspicious mark, and born with armour and ear-rings? This prince among men deserveth the sovereignty of the world, not of

Anga only. If there be anybody here to whom what I have done unto Karna is not acceptable, let him mount his chariot and with his feet bend his bow.'

This was greeted with loud cheers by the whole amphitheatre, and soon after the Sun also went down. Taking Karna by the hand Duryodhana led him out of the arena which was lit with countless lamps. And the Pandavas also, accompanied by Drona, Kripa and Bhishma, returned to their abodes. The people too dispersed, some applauding Arjuna, some Karna, and some Duryodhana. And Kunti, recognising her son in Karna by the various auspicious marks on his person and beholding him installed in the sovereignty of Anga, was, from motherly affection, overjoyed. Having thus enlisted the support of Karna Duryodhana was no longer afraid of Arjuna."

DRONA DEMANDS HIS FEE

Vaisampayana continued: "Drona thought the time had come when he could demand the preceptorial fee. Assembling his pupils one day, he said: 'Seize Drupada, the king of Panchala, in battle and bring him unto me. That shall be the most acceptable fee.' Those warriors then answering: 'So be it,' speedily got into their chariots, and accompanied by him laid siege to the capital of the great Drupada.

After capturing Drupada on the field of battle along with his friends and counsellors, they brought him before Drona. And Drona, beholding Drupada thus brought humiliated and deprived of wealth, recollected that monarch's former disdain and addressing him said: 'Fear not for thy life, brave king! We Brahmanas are ever forgiving. I ask for thy friendship again. And as a boon unasked I give thee half the kingdom that was thine. Thou toldest me before that no one who was not a king could be a king's friend. Therefore is it, Yajnasena, that I return half thy kingdom. And Panchala, if it pleaseth thee, know me hence for thy friend.'

YUDHISHTHIRA AS HEIR-APPARENT

Vaisampayana continued: "Then at the end of a year Yudhishtira was installed as the heir-apparent of the kingdom. Within a short time Yudhishtira, by his conduct and devotion to duty, eclipsed the fame of his father. Indeed, Arjuna and the other Pandava princes became so powerful that they slew in battle the great Sauvira who had performed a sacrifice for three years, undaunted by the onslaught of the *Gandharvas*. The king of the Yavanas whom even the powerful Pandu had failed to bring under subjection was also subdued by Arjuna. Assisted by Bhima, Arjuna going in a lone chariot conquered all the kings of the East. Having similarly conquered the whole of the South, Dhananjaya brought back a large booty.

Thus did those foremost of men, the illustrious Pandavas, extend, by their exploits, the limits of their own kingdom. Hearing of the power and renown of those mighty archers, King Dhritharashtra's attitude suddenly changed into one of ill-will towards the Pandavas; and from that day the monarch became so anxious that he could not sleep."

DHRITHARASHTRA BECOMES JEALOUS OF THE PANDAVAS

Vaisampayana continued: "Then summoning unto his side Kanika, that foremost of ministers well versed in the science of politics, the king said: 'O best of Brahmanas, the Pandavas are daily overshadowing the Earth. I am getting exceedingly jealous of them. Should I have peace or war with them? O Kanika, advise me truly and I shall do as thou biddest.'

That best of Brahmanas, thus addressed by the king, answered him frankly in these pointed words in consonance with the principles of state-craft.

'Listen to me, O sinless king, I beseech thee not to be wroth with me after hearing all I have to say.

Kings should ever be ready with uplifted maces (to strike when necessary), and they should ever increase their prowess. Carefully avoiding all faults themselves, they should ceaselessly watch the mistakes of their foes and take advantage of them. If the king is ever ready to strike, everybody feareth him. He should so conduct himself that his foe may not find out his weak spots. But through the weakness he detecteth in his foe he should pursue him to destruction. He should always conceal, as the tortoise does its body, his means and ends. Once he embarks on an enterprise he should see it through. Behold, a thorn, if not extracted wholly, produceth a festering sore ! O, sire, an enemy should never be scorned, however contemptible. A spark of fire is capable of consuming an extensive forest.

Kings should sometimes feign blindness and deafness; if impotent to chastise, they should pretend not to notice the faults that call for punishment. But they should be always on the alert like a herd of deer sleeping in the woods. Thou must destroy thy foes, tearing them up by the roots. Then shouldst thou destroy their allies and partisans. The allies and partisans can never survive if the principal be destroyed. If the root of the tree is torn up, the branches and twigs can never thrive as before. By maintaining perpetual fire, by sacrifices, by donning brown cloth, by matted locks, and by using hides of animals for thy bedding, shouldst thou at first gain the trust of thy foes; and when thou hast gained it thou shouldst then spring upon them like a wolf. For it hath been said that, in the acquisition of wealth, even the garb of holiness might be employed, much as a hooked staff is used to bend down a branch for plucking fruits that are ripe. The method followed in plucking fruits should be employed in destroying foes, and thou shouldst go by the principle of selection. Bear thy foe upon thy shoulders till the time cometh when thou canst throw him off, breaking him into pieces like an earthen pot dashed upon a stony surface. The foe must never be let off even though he addresseth thee most piteously. No pity shouldst thou show.

him, but slay him at once. By arts of conciliation or bribery should the foe be slain. By sowing dissensions amongst his allies or by the employment of force, indeed, by every means in thy power shouldst thou destroy thy foe.'

Dhritharashtra said: 'Tell me truly how a foe can be destroyed by arts of conciliation, or the expenditure of money, or by producing disunion, or by the employment of force.'

Kanika replied: "Listen, O monarch, to the history of a jackal dwelling in days of yore in the forest and fully acquainted with the science of politics.

There was a wise jackal, mindful of his own interests, who lived in the company of four friends, viz., a tiger, a mouse, a wolf, and a mongoose. One day, they saw in the woods a strong deer—the leader of a herd—whom, however, they could not seize for his fleetness and strength. They thereupon called a council for consultation. The jackal opening the proceedings said: 'Tiger, thou hast made many an effort to seize this deer, but all in vain, simply because this deer is young, fleet of foot and very intelligent. Let now the mouse go and eat into its feet when it lieth asleep. And when this is done, let the tiger approach and seize it. Then we shall all with great pleasure feast on it.' Hearing these words of the jackal they all set to work very cautiously as he directed. The mouse ate into the feet of the deer and the tiger killed it as planned. And beholding the body of the deer lying motionless on the ground, the jackal said unto his companions: 'Blessed be ye! Go and perform your ablutions. In the meantime I will look after the deer.' Hearing what the jackal said, they all went into a stream. And the jackal waited, deeply meditating upon what he should do. The tiger endued with great strength was the first to return after having performed his ablutions. And he found the jackal deep in thought. The tiger said: 'Why art thou so depressed, wise one? Thou art the foremost of all intelligent beings. Let us enjoy ourselves to-day by feasting on this carcass.' The jackal said: 'Hear, mighty-armed one, what the mouse hath said.' He hath even said:

'Fie on the strength of the king of beasts ! This deer hath been slain by me. Through the might of my arm he is to-day going to gratify his hunger. When he hath boasted in such language, I, for one, do not wish to touch this food.' The tiger replied: 'If, indeed, the mouse hath said so, I must look sharp. I shall from this day slay, with the might of my own arms alone, creatures ranging the forest and then feast on their flesh.' Saying this, the tiger went away.

After the tiger had left the spot, the mouse came. And seeing the mouse, the jackal said: 'Blest be thou, mouse, but listen to what the mongoose hath said. He hath even said: 'The carcass of this deer is poison (the tiger having touched it with his claws). I will not eat of it. On the other hand, if thou, jackal, permittest, I will even slay the mouse and feast on him.' Hearing this the mouse became alarmed and quickly entered his hole.

After the mouse had gone, the wolf came there having performed his ablutions. And the jackal said unto him: 'The king of the beasts hath been angry with thee. Evil is certain to overtake thee. He is expected here with his wife. Do as thou pleasest.' Thus was the wolf also, fond of animal flesh, got rid of by the jackal.

Then the mongoose came, and the jackal said: 'By the might of my arm have I defeated the others who have already fled. Fight with me first and then eat of this flesh if you please.' The mongoose replied: 'When, indeed, the tiger, the wolf, and the intelligent mouse have all been defeated by thee, heroes as they are, thou seemest to be a greater hero still. I do not desire to fight with thee.' Saying this, the mongoose also went away.

Kanika continued: "If kings always act in this way they can be happy. Thus should the timid by exciting their fears, the courageous by arts of conciliation, the covetous by gifts of wealth, and equals and inferiors by exhibition of prowess be brought under thy sway. Listen now to something more that I am going to say.

If thy son, friend, brother, father, or even the spiritual preceptor becometh thy foe, thou shouldst, if desirous of prosperity, slay him without scruples. By curses and incantations, by gifts of wealth, by poison, or by deception, the foe should be slain. If the spiritual preceptor be vain, ignorant of what should be done and what should not be done, and vicious in his ways, even he should be chastised.

If thou art angry, behave as if thou art not so, speaking even then with a smile on thy lips. Never reprove any one with indications of anger in thy speech. And, O Bharata, speak soft words before thou smiteth and even while thou art smiting ! After the smiting is over, pity the victim, grieve for him, and even shed tears.

Thou shouldst burn the house of him whom thou punishest with death. And thou shouldst never permit beggars, atheists and thieves to dwell in thy kingdom.

Thou shouldst ever stand in fear of even one from whom there is nothing to fear, not to speak of him from whom there is everything to fear. For, if the first ever becomes powerful he may destroy thee by the root for thy unpreparedness. Thou shouldst never trust the faithless nor trust too much those that are faithful; for, if those in whom thou confidest prove thy foes, thou art certain to be annihilated. After testing their loyalty thou shouldst employ spies in thy own kingdom and in the kingdoms of others. Thy spies in foreign kingdoms should be artful deceivers in the garb of ascetics. They should be placed in gardens, places of amusement, temples and other holy places, drinking halls, streets, and with the (eighteen) *tirthas* (*viz.*, the minister, the chief priest, the heir-presumptive, the commander-in-chief, the gate-keepers of the court, the personnel of the inner apartments, the jailor, the chief purveyor, the head of the treasury, the chief executive, the chief of the town police, the chief architect, the chief justice, the president of the council, the chief of the punitive department, the commander of the fort, the chief of the frontier guards, and the keeper of the forests), and

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in places of sacrifice, near wells, on mountains and near rivers, in forests and in all places where people congregate.

When thou art fallen, thou shouldst raise thyself by any means, gentle or violent; and after thou hast thus raised thyself thou shouldst practise virtue. He that hath never known misfortune can never have prosperity.

He who, having concluded a treaty with an enemy, reposeth at ease as if he hath nothing more to do, is very like a person who awaketh, fallen down from the top of a tree whereon he had slept.

A prudent king should ever act in such a way that friends and foes may never know his motive until he begins to act. Let them know all when the act hath been commenced or ended.

He who trusteth in a foe who hath been brought under subjection by force summoneth his own death as a crab does by her act of conception. Thou shouldst always anticipate the future and concert measures timely for meeting it; else, from want of calmness caused by haste, thou mayest overlook even an important point when the problem is actually before thee. It is well known that time and place (properly taken into consideration) always produce the greatest good.

The hope thou givest unto thy foe should be long in fulfilling; and when the time cometh for its fulfilment, invent some pretext for deferring it further. Let that pretext be shown as founded upon some reason, and let that reason itself be made to appear as founded on some other reason. In the matter of destroying their foes, kings should ever resemble razors in every particular: hiding their intents just as the latter are concealed in their leathern cases; striking when the opportunity cometh, as they are used on proper occasions; sweeping off their foes with all their allies and dependants, as they shave the head or the chin without leaving a single hair; and be as unpitying as they are sharp.

O upholder of the dignity of the Kurus, bearing thyself towards the Pandavas and others also as policy dictateth,

act in such a way that thou mayest not have to grieve in future. Well do I know that thou art endued with every blessing and possessed of every mark of good fortune. Therefore, O king, protect thyself against the sons of Pandu. The sons of Pandu are stronger than their cousins, thy sons; therefore, I tell thee plainly what thou shouldst do. Listen to it with thy children, and having listened to it exert yourselves to do the needful."

DURYODHANA'S MACHINATIONS

Janamejaya said: "Best of Brahmanas, I desire to hear in full the story of the burning of the house of lac and the escape of the Pandavas therefrom. That was a cruel deed of the Kurus, acting under the counsels of the wicked Kanika. Recite the history to me of all that happened. I am burning with curiosity to hear it."

Vaisampayana said: "Listen to me, O monarch, as I recite the history of the burning of the house of lac and the escape of the Pandavas. The wicked Duryodhana, beholding Bhimasena surpass everybody in strength and Arjuna highly accomplished in arms, became pensive and sad. Then Karna, the offspring of the Sun, and Sakuni, the son of Suvala, endeavoured by various means to compass the death of the Pandavas. The Pandavas too counteracted all those contrivances one after another, and in obedience to the counsels of Vidura never spoke of them afterwards. And the citizens, noting that the son of Pandu possessed every accomplishment, began to talk about the Pandavas in all places of public resort. In courtyards and other places of gathering, they spoke of the eldest son of Pandu (Yudhishtira) as possessing all the qualifications for ruling the kingdom. They said: 'Dhritharashtra, though possessing knowledge, being born blind, obtained not the kingdom before. How can he become king now? Again, Bhishma, having formerly relinquished the sovereignty, would never accept it now. We shall, therefore, now instal on the throne,

with proper ceremonies, the eldest of the Pandavas endued with youth, accomplished in battle, versed in the *Vedas*, truthful and kind.'

The wretched Duryodhana, hearing these words of the prating partisans of Yudhishtira, became very much distressed. Inflamed with jealousy, he went unto Dhritharashtra, and finding him alone he saluted him with reverence and said: 'O father, I have heard the citizens uttering words of ill omen. Passing thee by, and Bhishma too, they desire the son of Pandu to be their king. Bhishma will sanction this, for he will not rule the kingdom. It seems, therefore, that the citizens are endeavouring to inflict a great injury on us. Pandu obtained the ancestral kingdom of old by virtue of his own accomplishments; and, owing to blindness, thou couldst not get it, though fully qualified to have it. If Pandu's son now obtaineth the kingdom as his inheritance from Pandu, then his son will obtain it after him and that son's son also, and so on it will descend in Pandu's line. In that case, we and our children, excluded from the royal line, shall certainly be disregarded by everyone. Therefore, O monarch, take such measures that we may not suffer perpetual distress and become dependent on others for our food. If thou hadst obtained the sovereignty before, we would certainly have succeeded to it, however ill disposed the people might be towards us.'

Vaisampayana continued: "King Dhritharashtra on hearing these words of his son and recalling all that Kanika had said unto him was sorely grieved; and his mind also thereupon began to waver. Then Duryodhana, Karna, Sakuni, and Dussasana held a consultation. Prince Duryodhana said unto Dhritharashtra: 'Father, by some clever ruse send the Pandavas away to the town of Varanavata. We shall then have no fear of them.' Dhritharashtra reflected for a moment and replied: 'Pandus, ever devoted to virtue, always behaved dutifully towards all his relatives and particularly towards me. He cared but little for the blandishments of the world, but lovingly gave everything unto me—

even the kingdom. His son is as righteous in conduct as he and has every accomplishment. Of world-wide fame, he is also the favourite of the people. Having allies as he does, how can we exile him by force from his ancestral kingdom? The counsellors and soldiers, their sons and grandsons have all been cherished and maintained by Pandu. Thus beholden to Pandu, O child, would not the citizens slay us now with all our friends and relatives for the sake of Yudhishthira?’

Duryodhana replied: ‘What thou sayest, father, is perfectly true. But, if we conciliate the people with wealth and honours, they would assuredly side with us, seeing these proofs of our power. The treasury and the ministers of state are at the moment under our control. Therefore, it now behoveth thee by some gentle means to banish the Pandavas to the town of Varanavata. When the sovereignty shall have been vested in me, then Kunti with her children may come back.’

Dhritharashtra replied: ‘This, Duryodhana, is just what I have been thinking. But in view of its sinfulness I have never given expression to it. Neither Bhishma, Drona, Khatri, nor Gautama (Kripa) will ever approve the exile of the Pandavas. In their eyes we and the Pandavas are equal. Those wise and virtuous men will make no distinction between us. If, therefore, we behave in this manner towards the Pandavas, shall we not, son, be condemned by the Kurus, by these illustrious personages and by the whole world?’

Duryodhana answered: ‘Bhishma hath no great love for either side and will, therefore, be neutral. The son of Drona (Aswatthaman) is on my side. There is no doubt that where the son is there will the father be. Kripa will be on the same side as Drona and Aswatthaman. He will never abandon Drona and his sister’s son (Aswatthaman). Khatri (Vidura) is dependent on us, though his sympathies are with the foe. Even if he openly sides with the Pandavas he can do us no injury by himself. Therefore, exile thou the Pandavas to Varanavata without any

fear and take such steps that they may go thither this very day. By this act, father, put out the grief that consumeth me like a blazing fire, robbeth me of sleep and pierceth my heart even like a terrible dart.'

Then Prince Duryodhana, along with his brothers, began gradually to win over the people to his side by granting them wealth and honours. Meanwhile, at the instance of Dhritharashtra, some clever councillors, one day, described, in court, the town of Varanavata as a charming place. They said: 'The festival of Pasupati (Siva) hath commenced in the town of Varanavata. The concourse of people is great and the procession is the most magnificent ever witnessed on earth.' And when Dhritharashtra saw that the curiosity of the Pandavas had been awakened, he spoke to them: 'These, my men, often speak of Varanavata as the most delightful town in the world. If, therefore, ye children desire to witness that festival, go to Varanavata with your followers and friends and enjoy yourselves there like the celestials. Give ye away in charity pearls and gems unto the Brahmanas and the musicians that may be assembled there; and sporting there for sometime as ye please, return ye to Hastinapura.'

Yudhishtira, fully aware of the motive of Dhritharashtra and knowing that he himself was weak and friendless, replied unto the king: 'So be it.' Then addressing Bhishma, the wise Vidura, Drona, Valhika, the Kaurava Somadatta, Kripa, Aswatthaman, Bhurisravas, other reverend councillors, the Brahmanas, ascetics, priests, citizens and the illustrious Gandhari, he said slowly and humbly: 'With our friends and followers we go to the delightful and populous town of Varanavata at the command of Dhritharashtra. Give us your hearty benedictions so that we may thrive and may not be touched by sin.' Thus addressed by the eldest of Pandu's sons, the Kaurava chiefs all cheerfully pronounced blessings on them, saying: 'Ye sons of Pandu, may all the elements bless you in your course and may not the slightest evil befall you.'

THE HOUSE OF LAC AND PANDAVAS' ESCAPE

Vaisampayana said: "The wicked Duryodhana was very pleased with what the king, O Bharata, had said unto the Pandavas. Summoning his counsellor, Purochana, secretly, he took hold of his right hand and said: 'O Purochana, this world, so full of wealth, is mine. But it is thine equally with me. It behoveth thee, therefore, to protect it. I have no counsellor more trustworthy than thyself. Destroy my foes by a clever device. Do as I bid thee. The Pandavas have been sent to Varanavata and they will be enjoying themselves there during the festivities. Arrange that thou mayest this very day reach Varanavata, going by a car drawn by swift mules. Let a quadrangular palace be erected in the neighbourhood of the arsenal and guard thou the mansion well. And use thou, in erecting that house, hemp, resin and such other inflammable materials as are available. And mixing a little earth with clarified butter, oil, fat and a large portion of lac, make thou a plaster for lining the walls. And scatter all around that house hemp, oil, clarified butter, lac and wood in such a way that the Pandavas, or any others, may not discover them even after careful scrutiny or conclude the house to be an inflammable one. Having erected such a mansion, cause thou the Pandavas, after worshipping them with great reverence, to live in it with Kunti and all their friends. Place thou there seats, conveyances and beds, all of the best workmanship, for the Pandavas, so that Dhritharashtra may have no reason to complain. Assuring thyself that the Pandavas are sleeping within, and without any suspicion or fear, thou must then set fire to the mansion beginning at the outer door. The Pandavas thereupon would be burnt to death, but the people would imagine that they had been burnt in an accidental conflagration of their house.'

Saying 'So be it' unto the Kuru Prince, Purochana repaired to Varanavata, and without loss of time he did everything the prince had bid him do.

Meanwhile, the Pandavas mounted their cars, yoking thereto horses having the speed of wind; and bidding farewell to all the citizens they set out for Varanavata. Vidura of great wisdom, other Kuru leaders as well as the citizens followed those tigers among men for some distance in great sorrow. Some of the people who followed them, moved beyond measure at beholding the sons of Pandu in such distress, began to say aloud: 'King Dhritharashtra of wicked soul seeth not things impartially. The Kuru monarch hath no regard for virtue. Neither the sinless Yudhishtira, nor Bhima the foremost of mighty men, nor Dhananjaya will ever be guilty of the sin of waging a rebellion. Having inherited the kingdom from their father, Dhritharashtra cannot bear to see them. How is it that Bhishma allows this great injustice? Vichitravirya, the son of Santanu, and the royal sage Pandu of Kuru's race both cherished us of old with fatherly care. We who do not approve of this exile shall all go with Yudhishtira, leaving this excellent town and our own homes.'

Unto those distressed citizens talking in this manner, the virtuous Yudhishtira, himself afflicted with sorrow, reflecting for a few moments said: 'The King is our father, worthy of regard, our spiritual guide, and our superior. To execute with unsuspecting hearts whatever he biddeth is, indeed, our duty. Ye are our friends. Return ye to your abodes. When the time cometh for anything to be done for us by you, then, indeed, accomplish all that is agreeable and beneficial to us.' Thus addressed, the citizens walked round the Pandavas and having blessed them returned to their respective abodes.

And after the citizens had ceased following the Pandavas, Vidura, anxious to warn the eldest of the Pandavas of the impending danger, spoke to him in the *Mlechchha* tongue, so as to be unintelligible to any except Yudhishtira.

On hearing that the sons of Pandu had arrived, the citizens of Varanavata in great joy turned out quickly in vehicles of various kinds numbering thousands, bringing

with them every auspicious article prescribed by the *Sastras*, for receiving those foremost of men. And those sinless ones, welcomed by the citizens and greeting them in return, then entered the populous town of Varanavata which had been decorated in their honour. On entering the town those heroes first visited the abodes of the Brahmanas, then those of the officials of the town, the *Sutas* and the *Vaisyas* and then those of the *Sudras*.

When they had lived there for ten nights, Purochana spoke to them of the mansion he had built which was called 'The blessed home', but in reality the cursed house. Yudhishtira inspected the house, and noticing the smell of fat mixed with clarified butter and preparations of lac said unto Bhima: 'This house is truly built of inflammable materials. This wicked wretch, Purochana, acting under the instructions of Duryodhana, bideth here with the object of burning me to death when he seeth me trustful. But, Vidura of great intelligence knew of this danger and hath already apprised me of it.'

Hearing this, Bhima replied: 'If, sir, you know this house to be so inflammable, it would then be well for us to return thither where we had taken up our quarters first.' Yudhishtira said: 'It seems to me that we should rather live here, seemingly unsuspecting, but all the while with caution and our senses wide awake and seeking for some sure means of escape. If Purochana findeth from our countenance that we have fathomed his designs, he may acting with haste suddenly burn us to death. If, however, from fear of being burnt, we fly from here, Duryodhana, ambitious of sovereignty, will certainly compass our death through spies. While we have no position and power, Duryodhana hath both; while we have no friends and allies, Duryodhana hath both; while we are without wealth, Duryodhana commandeth a full treasury. Let us, therefore, deceiving this wretch (Purochana) and that other wretch Duryodhana, pass our days, disguising ourselves at times. Let us also lead a hunting life, wandering over the earth. We shall also

this very day cause a subterranean passage to be dug in our chamber in great secrecy. We shall live here, actively doing everything for our safety but with such privacy that neither Purochana nor any of the citizens of Varanavata may have any idea of what we are doing.'

Vaisampayana continued: "One day a friend of Vidura, well skilled in mining, coming unto the Pandavas told them in secret: 'I have been sent by Vidura and am a skilful miner. Tell me what I can do for ye. Purochana will set fire to the door of thy house on the fourteenth night of this dark fortnight. O son of Pandu, Vidura also told thee something in the *Mlechchha* tongue to which thou also replied in the same language. I state these particulars as my credentials.' Hearing these words, Yudhishtira replied: 'I now know thee as a dear and trusted friend of Vidura, true and ever devoted to him. Protect us as the learned Vidura ever protecteth us. I know that this house, so inflammable, hath been purposely built for me by Purochana at the command of Dhritharashtra's son. That wicked wretch commanding wealth and allies pursueth us without intermission. Save us with a little exertion from the impending conflagration. Here is that wretch's well-furnished arsenal. This large mansion hath been built abutting the high ramparts of the arsenal without any outlet. The danger of which Khatri had foreknowledge is now at our door.'

Carefully beginning his work of excavation the miner made a large subterranean passage. The mouth of that passage was in the centre of that house on a level with the floor and it was closed up with planks. The Pandavas used to sleep within their chambers with arms by their side ready for use. Thus, they lived in that mansion, always on the alert, deceiving Purochana by a show of trustfulness and contentment.

Seeing the Pandavas living thus cheerfully and without suspicion for a full year Purochana became exceedingly glad. And beholding Purochana happy, Yudhishtira said to Bhima, Arjuna and the twins (Nakula and Sahadeva)

'The cruel-hearted wretch hath been well deceived. I think the time is ripe for our escape. Let us set fire to the arsenal and burn Purochana to death, and leaving his body here let us fly hence without being noticed by anyone.

Then, on the occasion of an almsgiving, Kunti fed on a certain night a large number of Brahmanas. There came to that feast, as if impelled by fate, in the course of her wanderings, a poor Nishada woman, the mother of five children, accompanied by all her sons. She and her children, intoxicated with the wine they drank, lay down in that mansion to sleep. When all the inmates of the house had retired to bed, a violent wind began to blow in the night. Bhima then set fire to the house just where Purochana was sleeping. When the sons of Pandu were satisfied that the house had caught fire at several points, they, with their mother, entered the subterranean passage without losing any time. The heat and the roar of the fire was so great that it awakened the townspeople. Beholding the house all in flames, the citizens with sad faces began to say: 'The wretch Purochana had built this house, under the instructions of Duryodhana, for destroying his employer's relatives. It is he, indeed, that hath set fire to it. O fie on Dhritharashtra's heart which is so partial! He hath burnt to death, as if he were their foe, the sinless heirs of Pandu. The sinful and wicked-souled Purochana who hath burnt those best of men, the innocent and unsuspecting princes, hath himself been burnt to death as fate would have it.'

Vaisampayana continued: "The citizens of Varanavata thus bewailed the fate of the Pandavas and watched there the whole night. The Pandavas, however, accompanied by their mother, coming out of the subterranean passage, fled in haste without being observed by anyone. But from want of sleep and fear they could not make much headway. At last Bhimasena, carrying all his brothers and mother, began to push through the darkness. With his mother on his shoulder, the twins on each side and Yudhishtira and Arjuna on his arms, Vrikodara of great strength and endued with

the speed of the wind proceeded brushing the trees with his breast and pressing the earth deep with his tread.

About this time, the learned Vidura had sent into those woods a man of good character and much trusted by him. He led the Pandavas to the sacred banks of Ganga where a boat, constructed by trusted artificers and capable of withstanding wind and wave and endued with the speed of the tempest or of thought, lay in readiness equipped with engines and sails. He took them across the river, and after seeing them all safe on the opposite bank he uttered the word '*Jaya*' and then left them.

When King Dhritharashtra heard the sad news of the death of the Pandavas, he wept in great sorrow. And he said: 'King Pandu, my brother of great fame, hath, indeed, died to-day when those heroic sons of his, together with their mother, have been burnt to death. Ye men, repair quickly to Varanavata and cause the funeral rites to be performed of those heroes and of the daughter of Kuntiraj. Let also the bones of the deceased be duly sanctified, and let all the acts of piety (usual on such occasions) be performed in a befitting manner.' "

PANDAVAS IN THE FOREST

Vaisampayana said: "Leaving the boat, the Pandavas proceeded in a southerly direction, finding their way in the dark by the light of the stars. After much suffering they at last reached a dense forest. They were tired and thirsty; sleep was closing upon their eyes every moment. Then Yudhishtira addressing Bhima said: 'We are now in the deep woods. We know not which side is which, nor can we proceed much further. O Bharata, taking us on thyself proceed as before. Thou alone amongst us art strong and swift as the wind.'

Even as the leader of a herd of elephants, angry and bursting with energy during the season of rut, passeth through the woods breaking down mighty trees, so

did mighty Bhima as he proceeded, making a path for himself, treading down the trees and creepers before him. Indeed, so great was the force with which Bhima, endued with the speed of Garuda or of Marut (the god of wind), proceeded that the Pandavas seemed to faint under it. Towards the evening Bhima (bearing his brothers and mother on his back) reached a terrible forest where fruits and roots and water were scarce and which resounded with the terrible cries of birds and beasts. Tired, thirsty and heavy with sleep they were unable to proceed further. Distressed at seeing his mother and brothers asleep on the bare ground, Vrikodara began to weep and said to himself: 'Oh, wretch that I am who beholdeth his brothers sleep on the bare ground, what can befall unto me more painful than this? Oh, what more painful sight shall I ever behold than that of Kunti—the sister of Vasudeva, that grinder of hostile hosts, the daughter of Kuntiraja, decked with every auspicious mark, the daughter-in-law of Vichitraviryya, the wife of the illustrious Pandu, the mother of us (five brothers)—resplendent as the filaments of the lotus, delicate and tender and fit to sleep on the costliest bed, thus asleep, as she should never be, on the bare ground! Oh, the virtuous Yudhishtira who deserveth the sovereignty of the three worlds sleepeth fatigued like an ordinary man on the bare ground. This Arjuna of the darkish hue of blue clouds, peerless amongst men, sleepeth on the ground like a common man! Oh, what can be more painful than this? Oh, the twins, who in beauty are like the twin Aswins amongst the celestials, are asleep like ordinary mortals on the bare ground! Having already suffered so much, where now are we to go? Ye sons of Dhritharashtra of little foresight, ye wicked men, enjoy your temporary success. The gods are certainly propitious to you. But ye wicked wretches, ye are alive yet only because Yudhishtira doth not allow me to take your lives. Else this very day, filled as I am with wrath, I would send thee, Duryodhana, to the regions of Yama with thy children, friends, brothers, Karna and Sakuni.'

Saying this, Bhima sat there awake, keeping watch over his sleeping mother and brothers.

Not far from the place where the Pandavas were asleep, a *Rakshasa*, called Hidimba, dwelt on a Sala tree. Scenting the odour of man, he said to his sister: 'It is a long time since such agreeable food came my way. Go and ascertain who they are that are lying asleep in these woods. Slaughtering all these men, bring them unto me. They sleep within my domain. After feasting to our fill on human flesh we shall dance together to various measures.'

On reaching the spot she beheld the Pandavas asleep with their mother and the invincible Bhimasena sitting awake. At the sight of Bhimasena, unrivalled on earth for beauty and like unto a vigorous Sala tree, the *Rakshasa* woman immediately fell in love with him and she said to herself: 'I shall not obey the cruel mandate of my brother. A woman's love for her husband is stronger than her affection for her brother.' Thus saying, the *Rakshasa* woman, capable of taking any form at will, assumed a lovely human form. Decked with celestial ornaments she advanced with smiles on her lips and a modest gait and addressed Bhima: 'Whence hast thou come here and who art thou? Beholding thee resplendent as a god, I would have no one for my husband save thee. My heart and body have been pierced by (the shafts of) Kama. O, desirous as I am of obtaining thee, make me thine.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Meanwhile, Hidimba, the chief of the *Rakshasas*, seeing that his sister returned not soon enough, alighted from the tree and proceeded quickly to the spot where the Pandavas were sleeping. Beholding his sister in a charming human form the cannibal at once suspected that she was desirous of carnal intercourse and became indignant; and he charged at her with the object of killing her then and there. But Bhima rebuked him and said: 'Stop, Stop, O Hidimba, what need is there for thee to awaken these persons who are sleeping so soundly? Wicked cannibal!

Approach me first without loss of time. Smite me first; it behoveth thee not to kill a woman.'

Then Bhima of terrible prowess quickly seized with great force the extended arms of the *Rakshasa* who had rushed at him. Fighting like two full-grown elephants mad with rage, they began to pull down the trees and tear the creepers that grew around. And at those sounds, the sleeping Pandavas woke up and saw the Hidimba woman sitting before them.

Bhima blazing up with anger summoned the might that (his father) Vayu (the wind-god) puts forth at the time of universal dissolution. He quickly lifted, high in the air, the *Rakshasa's* body, blue as the clouds of heaven, whirled it a hundred times and dashing the *Rakshasa* on the ground with all his might slew him as if he were a beast. Beholding Hidimba slain, they became exceedingly glad and lost no time in offering their congratulations to Bhima. Then Arjuna made obeisance to the illustrious Bhima of terrible prowess and said: 'Reverend senior, I think there is a town not far off from this forest. Blest be thou, let us go hence soon so that Duryodhana may not trace us.'

Then all those mighty car-warriors proceeded along with their mother, followed by Hidimba, the *Rakshasa* woman.

Hidimba, assuming the handsomest form, sported with Bhima and studied to make him happy. In time she conceived and brought forth a mighty son. Having frightful eyes, large mouth and ears straight as an arrow, the child was terrible to behold. Of long nose, broad chest, frightfully swelling calves, quick motion and immense strength, he had nothing human in his countenance, though born of man. And he excelled in strength and prowess all *Pisachas* and kindred tribes as well as all *Rakshasas*. And, O monarch, he grew up to be a youth the very hour he was born. The mighty hero soon acquired great proficiency in all weapons. His mother having remarked that his head was bald like unto a *Ghata* (water-pot), they called him *Ghatotkacha* (the pot-headed). Ghatotkacha was exceedingly devoted to the

Pandavas and he became a great favourite with them; indeed, almost one of them.

After some time Hidimba, knowing that the period of her stay with her husband had come to an end, saluted the Pandavas and making a new appointment with them went away. And Ghatotkacha also—that foremost of *Rakshasas*—promising unto his father that he would come when wanted saluted them and went away towards the north. Indeed, it was the illustrious Indra who created the mighty car-warrior Ghatotkacha as a fit target for the ‘Sakti’ (missile) which he had given as a boon to Karna of unrivalled energy.

Vaisampayana said: “The heroic Pandavas then wandered from forest to forest killing deer and other animals for their food. They all had matted locks on their heads and were attired in barks of trees and the skins of animals. In the course of their wanderings they happened to meet their grandfather (Vyasa) who said: ‘I knew beforehand of this misfortune of yours. Knowing it, I have come to you, desirous of doing you some great good. Do not grieve for what hath befallen you. Know that all this is for your good. The sons of Dhritharashtra and you all are no doubt equally dear to me. But men are always partial to those who are in misfortune or who are of tender years. That is why my affection for you now is greater. Listen to me. Not far off there is a delightful town where no danger can overtake you. Live ye there in disguise, waiting for my return.’

Thus comforting the Pandavas he led them into the town of Ekachakra. And the master also consoled Kunti, saying: ‘Live, O daughter! This son of thine, Yudhishtira, ever devoted to truth, having by his justice conquered the whole world, will rule over all the other monarchs of the earth. There is little doubt that, having through Bhima’s and Arjuna’s prowess conquered the whole earth with her belt of seas, he will enjoy the sovereignty thereof. These tigers among men will also perform various sacrifices such as the *Rajasuya* and the *Aswamedha* (Horse-sacrifice) in which large presents are given to Brahmanas.’ ”

THE SLAYING OF BAKASURA

Janamejaya asked: 'O first of Brahmanas, what did the Pandavas do after reaching Ekachakra?'

Vaisampayana said: "Those mighty car-warriors lived there for some time in the abode of a Brahmana. Leading the life of mendicants, they used to place before Kunti at nightfall all they had gathered in their tours. And Kunti would divide it amongst them, the mighty Bhima alone taking one moiety while the rest took the other.

One day, it happened that Bhima remained at home with his mother Pritha. That day, Kunti heard a loud and heart-rending wail of sorrow coming from within the apartments of the Brahmana. Moved by pity, the amiable Pritha, addressing Bhima, said these words full of compassion: 'Our woes assuaged, we are living happily in the house of this Brahmana, respected by him and unknown to Dhritirashtra's sons. I have always been thinking of how to do some good to this Brahmana. He is a true man upon whom favours are never lost. He payeth back to others more than he receiveth at their hands. If we could be of any help to him, we should then be requiting his services.'

Hearing these words of his mother, Bhima said: 'Ascertain, mother, the nature of the Brahmana's distress and whence also it hath arisen. Learning all about it, relieve it I will, however difficult the task may prove.'

Vaisampayana continued: "While mother and son were thus talking with each other, they heard another wail of sorrow from the Brahmana and his wife. Then Kunti quickly entered the inner apartments of that illustrious Brahmana, even as a cow runs towards her tethered calf. She beheld the Brahmana sitting with a woeful face in the midst of his wife, son and daughter and heard him say: 'Oh, fie on this earthly life which is hollow as the reed and so fruitless after all; which is based on sorrow and hath no freedom, and which hath misery for its lot! Life is sorrow and disease. It is truly a record of misery. The same soul experienceth

Dharma, *Artha* and *Kama* the denial of which is the source of much misery. Some say that salvation (*Moksha*) is the highest object of our desire. But that cannot be had easily. The acquisition of wealth is hell; the pursuit of wealth is attended with misery; there is more misery in store after one has acquired it; for one loves one's possessions, and if any mishap befalls them, the possessor becomes miserable. I do not see by what means I can escape from this danger, nor how I can fly hence with my wife to some region free from danger. Remember, wife, that I tried to migrate to some other place where we could be happy. But thou wouldst not then listen to me. Though frequently solicited by me, thou, simple woman, told me: 'I have been born here, and here I have grown old. This is my ancestral homestead.' Led by affection for thy relatives thou didst not then pay heed to what I said. But the time is now come when thou art to witness the death of a relative. Perhaps, the time is come for my own death, for I shall never be able to abandon cruelly one of my own as long as I myself am alive. Thou art my helpmate in all good deeds, self-denying, and always affectionate unto me as a mother. The gods have given thee to me as a true friend and thou art ever my mainstay. Thou hast been made, by my parents, the participator in my domestic life. Of pure lineage and good disposition, the mother of children, devoted to me and so innocent; having chosen and wed thee with due rites, I cannot abandon thee, my wife, so constant in thy vows, to save my own life. How can I sacrifice my son, a child of tender years? How shall I sacrifice my daughter who hath been placed as a pledge in my hands by the illustrious Creator himself for bestowal on a husband and through whom I hope to enjoy, along with my ancestors, the regions attainable by those only that have daughters' sons? Some think that the father's affection for a son is greater; Others, that his affection for a daughter is greater; mine, however, is equal. If, again, I sacrifice myself and go to the other world, I should scarcely have any peace; for, indeed, it is evident that left by me these

would not be able to support life. The distress into which I have fallen is great; nor do I know the means of escape. Alas, what course shall I take to-day with my near ones! It is well that I should die with all these, for I can live no longer.'

Hearing these words of the Brahmana, his wife said: 'Thou shouldst not, Brahmana, grieve like an ordinary man. Nor is this the time for mourning. Thou hast learning. Thou knowest that all men are sure to die. And none should grieve for that which is inevitable. Possessed as thou art of a good understanding, kill thou thy sorrows. I will go there myself. This, indeed, is woman's highest and eternal duty, namely, that she should sacrifice herself for the husband's good. Such an act done by me will make thee happy and bring me fame in this world and eternal bliss hereafter. The object for which one desireth a wife hath already been achieved by thee through me. I have borne thee a daughter and a son, and I have thus been freed from the debt I owed thee. Thou art well able to support and cherish the children. I can never support and cherish them like thee. Thou art my life, wealth and lord. Bereft of thee, how shall these children of tender years and how also shall I myself exist? Widowed and masterless, with two children dependent on me, how shall I without thee keep the pair alive, while leading an honest life myself? If this daughter of thine is solicited in marriage by persons dishonourable, vain and unworthy of contracting an alliance with thee, how shall I be able to protect the girl? Indeed, as birds seek with avidity for meat that hath been thrown away on the ground, so do men approach a woman that hath lost her husband. O best of Brahmanas, solicited by wicked men, I may waver and may not be able to continue in the path that is desired by all honest persons. How shall I be able to set this sole daughter of thy house—this innocent girl—in the way along which her ancestors have always walked? How shall I be able to help thy son to acquire every desirable accomplishment to make him virtuous as thyself? And beholding thy son

become so unlike to thee, and thy daughter placed under the control of some unworthy person, I shall be scorned by the malicious, and in utter bewilderment I shall certainly die. These children, bereft of me and thee, their father, will, I doubt not, perish like fish when the water drieth up. There is no doubt that without thee all the three of us will perish. Therefore, it behoveth thee to sacrifice me. O Brahmana, persons conversant with morals have said that, for women who have borne children, to predecease their lords is an act of the highest merit. Ready am I to abandon this son and this daughter, these my relations and life itself for thee. To be ever employed in doing agreeable offices to her lord is a higher duty than sacrifices, asceticism, vows and charities of every description. The learned have enunciated the truth that one's wife, son, wealth and house are all sought as an insurance against mishaps, foreseen or unforeseen. The wise have also said that all one's relations weighed against one's own self would not be equal unto one's self. Therefore, reverend sir, protect thy own self by abandoning me. Give me leave to sacrifice myself. Cherish thou my children.

Besides, those versed in the rules of conduct have said in their treatises that women should never be salughtered and that *Rakshasas* are not ignorant of the rules of morality. While it is certain, therefore, that the *Rakshasa* will kill a man, it is doubtful if he will go to the extent of killing a woman.

I have enjoyed much happiness, have obtained much that is agreeable to me and have also acquired great religious merit. I have also had by thee children that are so dear to me. Therefore, it grieveth me not to die. O reverend sir, abandoning me thou mayest take another wife and through her thou mayest again acquire religious merit. There is no sin in this. In the case of a man polygamy is not an unrighteous act. It is, however, very sinful for a woman to betake herself to a second husband. Considering all this, and remembering too that sacrifice of thy own self is censurable,

liberate to-day without loss of time thy own self, thy race and these thy children by abandoning me.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Thus addressed by her, the Brahmana embraced her, and they both began to weep in silence.

Hearing these words of her afflicted parents the daughter was filled with grief, and she said to them: 'Why are you so afflicted and why do you weep as if you have none to care for you? Listen to me and then do what may be proper. There is little doubt that you are in duty bound to give me away at sometime. Abandon me now and save everything at the expense of myself alone. Men desire to have children, thinking that children would save them both in this and the regions hereafter. Cross the stream of your difficulties by means of my poor self, as if I were a raft. A child rescueth his parents in this and the other regions. Therefore is the child called by the learned *Putra* (*rescuer*). The ancestors desire daughter's sons as a special means of salvation. But without waiting for my children I will rescue them myself by protecting the life of my father. This my brother is of tender years. There is little doubt that he will perish if thou diest now. If thou, my father, diest and my brother followeth thee, the funeral cake of the *Pitris* will be suspended and they will all suffer much. Left behind by my father, brother and by my mother also (for she will not survive her husband and son), and plunged deeper and deeper in woe, I shall ultimately perish in great distress. The son is one's own self; the wife is one's friend; the daughter, however, is the source of trouble. Do thou save thyself, therefore, by giving me up and thereby set me in the path of virtue. For our sake, for the sake of virtue and also thy race save thyself, abandoning me whom at sometime thou shalt be constrained to give away. There need be no delay, father, in doing that which is inevitable. What can be more painful than that, when thou hast ascended to heaven, we should go about begging our food like dogs from strangers! But if thou art rescued with thy relations from

these difficulties, I shall then live happily in the region of the celestials.'

The Brahmana and his wife, hearing these lamentations of their daughter, became sadder than before, and the three began to weep together. Their son of tender years beholding them and their daughter thus weeping together lisped these words in a sweet tone with beaming eyes: 'Weep not, father, nor thou, mother, nor thou, O sister.' And smiling, the child approached each of them and taking up a blade of grass exclaimed in glee: 'With this I will slay that *Rakshasa* who eateth human beings.' Although all of them were in great anguish, yet hearing the prattle of the child they felt a thrill of delight. Then Kunti, thinking that to be the proper moment, approached the group and said these words. Indeed, her words revived them as nectar reviveth a person that is dead.

Kunti said: 'I wish to know the reason for this grief; for, if it can be removed I shall do so.'

The Brahmana replied: 'Thy speech is indeed worthy of thee. But this grief is incapable of being removed by any human being. Not far from this town there liveth a *Rakshasa* called Baka, and that cannibal is the lord of this country and town. Thriving on human flesh, that wretched *Rakshasa* endued with great strength ruleth this country. He is the chief of the *Asuras*, and this town and the country in which it is situate are protected by his might. The fee, however, fixed for that cannibal is his food, which consists of a cart-load of rice, two buffaloes and a human being who conveyeth them unto him. The house-holders have to send him this food in turn. That turn, destructive of one's family, hath now come to me and I shall have to give unto the *Rakshasa* the food described above which includes a human being. I have not the means to buy a man and I can on no account consent to part with any one of my family. Nor do I see any way of escape from the clutches of that *Rakshasa*. I am now sunk in an ocean of grief from which there is no escape. I shall go to that

Rakshasa to-day attended by all my family so that the wretch might devour us all at once.'

Kunti said: 'Grieve not, Brahmana. I can see a way to rescue thee from that *Rakshasa*. Thou hast but one son who, besides, is of very tender years. Thou hast an only daughter, young and helpless. I do not like that any of these or thy wife or even thyself should go unto the *Rakshasa*. I have five sons. Let one of them go, carrying, in thy behalf, the tribute of that *Rakshasa*.'

Hearing this, the Brahmana replied: 'I shall never suffer this to be done. I shall never sacrifice the life of a Brahmana or of a guest in order to save my own life. It is said that one should sacrifice one's self and, yea, one's offspring for the benefit of a Brahmana. I regard this maxim excellent and I like to follow it too. If I have to choose between the death of a Brahmana and my own, I would prefer the latter. The killing of a Brahmana is the greatest sin. There is no expiation for it. O blessed lady, in sacrificing myself I do not become guilty of self-destruction and no sin can attach to me when another takes my life. But, if I deliberately consent to the death of a Brahmana, it would be a cruel and sinful act, from the consequences of which there is no escape. The learned have declared that the abandonment of one who hath come to thy house or sought thy protection, as also the killing of one who seeketh death at thy hands, is both cruel and sinful. It is well for me that I should to-day perish along with my wife, but I would never sanction the death of a Brahmana.'

Kunti said: 'I too firmly believe that Brahmanas should ever be protected. For myself, no son of mine would be less dear to me even if I had a hundred instead of the five I have. But this *Rakshasa* will not be able to kill my son. That son of mine is endued with great prowess and energy and is skilled in *mantras*. He will faithfully deliver the food to the *Rakshasa*, but will, I know for a certainty, rescue himself. I have seen before many mighty *Rakshasas*

of gigantic size engaged in combat with my heroic son and killed too by him.'

Thus addressed by Pritha, the Brahmana and his wife were overjoyed and assented to Kunti's speech which was unto them as nectar. Then Kunti, accompanied by the Brahmana, approached Bhima and asked him to undertake that difficult task. Bhima replied unto them: 'So be it.'

Vaisampayana said: "After returning home with the alms they had obtained that day, and while sitting by the side of his mother, Yudhishtira asked her: 'What is the task, mother, that Bhima seeketh to accomplish? Doth he do so at thy command or of his own will?' Kunti replied: 'Bhima will at my command do this great deed for the good of the Brahmana and the liberation of this town.'

Yudhishtira said: 'What a rash thing thou hast done, mother! It is difficult to perform and almost amounteth to suicide. The learned never applaud forsaking one's own child. Why dost thou, mother, wish to sacrifice thy own child for the sake of another's? Thou hast, mother, acted not only against human practice but also against the teachings of the *Vedas*. That Bhima, relying on whose arms we sleep happily in the night and hope one day to recover the kingdom of which we have been deprived by the covetous son of Dhritharashtra, that hero of immeasurable energy, remembering whose prowess Duryodhana and Sakuni do not get a wink of sleep and by whose prowess we were rescued from the palace of lac and various other dangers, that Bhima who caused the death of Purochana, and relying on whose might we regard ourselves as having already slain the sons of Dhritharashtra and acquired the whole Earth with all her wealth; upon what considerations, mother, hast thou resolved on sacrificing him? Hast thou been deprived of thy reason? Hath thy understanding been clouded by the hardship thou hast undergone?'

Kunti answered: 'Yudhishtira, thou needst not be anxious at all on account of Vrikodara. Nor have I come to this resolve from any weakness of understanding. Respected

by him and our sorrows assuaged, we have, son, been living in the house of this Brahmana, unknown to the sons of Dhritharashtra. In order to requite that Brahmana I have resolved to do this. Beholding the prowess of Bhima on the occasion of our escape from the house of lac and from the destruction also of Hidimba, my confidence in Vrikodara is great. The might of Bhima's arms is equal unto that of ten thousand elephants. There is no one on earth equal unto Bhima in might; he may even overcome that foremost of warriors, the holder of the thunder-bolt himself. Soon after his birth he fell from my lap on the breast of the mountain. By the weight of his body the mass of stone on which he fell broke into pieces. I am not doing this from foolishness or ignorance or from any gainful motive. I have deliberately resolved to do this righteous deed. By this act, Yudhishtira, two objects will be accomplished: one is a requital of the services rendered by the Brahmana and the other is the acquisition of high religious merit. It is my conviction that the Kshatriya who helpeth a Brahmana acquireth regions of bliss hereafter. So also a Kshatriya who saveth the life of a Kshatriya achieveth great fame in this as well as the other world. A Kshatriya rendering help unto a Vaisya certainly pleaseth the whole universe. One belonging to the kingly class should protect also the Sudra who seeketh his protection. If he doth so, he will be born in a royal line in his next life, commanding prosperity and the respect of other kings. O scion of Puru's race, the illustrious Vyasa told me so in days gone by. It is for this that I have resolved to do so.'

Hearing these words of his mother, Yudhishtira said: 'Mother, what thou hast deliberately undertaken, moved by compassion for the Brahmana in trouble, is, indeed, excellent. But tell the Brahmana, mother, that he doth not do anything whereby the people in this town may get to know all about it, and make him promise to comply with thy request.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Then Bhimasena, taking with him the *Rakshasa's* food, set out for the place where the cannibal lived. The mighty son of Pandu, approaching the forest where the *Rakshasa* dwelt, began to eat himself the food he carried while calling the *Rakshasa* loudly by name. The *Rakshasa*, inflamed with anger at Bhima's words, appeared and approached Bhima. Of huge body and great strength, with red eyes, red beard, and red hair, he was terrible to behold. And he came, pressing the earth deep with his tread. The opening of his mouth was from ear to ear, and his ears themselves were straight as arrows. Beholding Bhima eating the food meant for him, the *Rakshasa* advanced, biting his nether lip and expanding his eyes in wrath. Addressing Bhima he said: 'Who is this fool who, desiring to go to the abode of Yama, eateth in my very sight the food intended for me.' Bhima smiled in derision and, disregarding the *Rakshasa*, continued eating with averted face. At this, the cannibal uttered a frightful yell and with both arms upraised ran at Bhima, desiring to kill him then and there. But, disregarding the *Rakshasa* and casting only a single glance at him, Vrikodara went on eating the *Rakshasa's* food. Filled with wrath at this, the *Rakshasa* struck from behind, with both his arms, a heavy blow on the back of Vrikodara. But Bhima did not even care to look at the *Rakshasa* but continued to eat as before. Then the mighty *Rakshasa* tore up a tree and rushed at Bhima to strike him again. Meanwhile, the mighty Bhima had leisurely eaten up the whole of the food and stood ready to fight. Smiling in derision, he caught with his left hand the tree hurled at him by the *Rakshasa*. That mighty *Rakshasa*, tearing up many more trees, hurled them at Bhima, and the Pandava also hurled as many at the *Rakshasa*. O king, the combat with trees became so terrible that the region around soon became destitute of trees. Then the *Rakshasa* shouting that he was none else than Baka sprang upon the Pandava and seized the mighty Bhima with his arms. That mighty hero also clasping with his own strong arms the strong-armed *Rakshasa*

began to drag him violently. Dragged by Bhima and dragging Bhima also, the cannibal was overcome with great fatigue. The Earth began to tremble under the force they both exerted. Then Bhima, beholding the cannibal overcome with fatigue, pressed him down on the ground with his knees and began to strike him with great force. Placing one knee on the middle of the *Rakshasa's* back, Bhima seized his neck with his right hand and the cloth on his waist with his left and bent him double with great force.

And Baka, huge as a mountain, died uttering frightful yells. Terrified by these sounds, the relatives of the *Rakshasa* arrived with their attendants. Seeing them terrified and bewildered, Bhima comforted them and made them promise to give up cannibalism. 'Do not ever again kill human beings. If ye kill men, ye will have to die even as Baka' said he. Then, dragging the lifeless cannibal, Bhima placed him at one of the gates of the town and went away unobserved by any one.

The next morning the inhabitants of the town on coming out saw the *Rakshasa* lying dead on the ground, his body covered with blood. Returning to Ekachakra, they soon spread the news. Then, the citizens, accompanied by their wives, the young and the old, all went to the spot in thousands. They were all amazed at seeing the superhuman feat and, instantly, they fell praying to the gods. Then they began to calculate whose turn it had been the day before to carry food to the *Rakshasa*. Ascertaining this, they came to the Brahmana and asked him to satisfy their curiosity. The Brahmana, however, in order to conceal the Pandavas, simply said: 'A certain high-souled Brahmana, skilled in *mantras*, saw me weeping with my relatives when I had been ordered to supply the *Rakshasa's* food. Asking me the cause and ascertaining the distress of the town, that first of Brahmanas gave me every assurance and cheerfully said: 'I shall carry the food for that wretched *Rakshasa* to-day. Have no fear for me. This deed, so beneficial unto us all, hath very certainly been done by him.'

The Brahmanas and Kshatriyas of the city, hearing this, wondered much. The Vaisyas and the Sudras also were exceedingly glad. And they all established a festival, in which the worship of Brahmanas was the principal ceremony, in remembrance of the Brahmana who had relieved them from fear of Baka."

THE JOURNEY TO PANCHALA

Janamejaya asked: 'O, Brahmana, what did those tigers among men, the Pandavas, do after they had slain the *Rakshasa* Baka?'

Vaisampayana said: "While the Pandavas were living disguised in the abode of the Brahmana, Vyasa once came to see them. The illustrious *Rishi*, after discoursing upon many topics of great interest, said to them: 'An illustrious *Rishi* had a daughter of slender waist, fair lips, fine eye-brows, and possessing every accomplishment. As a consequence of the *Karma* of a former life the fair maid was very unfortunate; and, though chaste and beautiful, the damsel obtained not a husband. With a sorrowful heart she thereupon began to practise ascetic penances with the object of securing a husband, and she soon gratified the god Sankara (Mahadeva), by her severe asceticism. The god became propitious unto her and said: 'Ask thou the boon thou desirest. Blest be thou. I am Sankara prepared to give thee what thou wilt ask.' The maid then repeatedly said unto the supreme lord: 'O give me a husband endued with every accomplishment.' Then Isana (Mahadeva) replied unto her: 'Blessed one, thou shalt have five husbands from among the Bharata princes.' Thus told, the maiden said unto the god who had given her that boon: 'O lord, I desire to have only one husband through thy grace.' The god then said: 'Thou hast, O girl, said full five times,—*Give me a husband*. Thou shalt, therefore, in another life have five husbands.' Ye princes of Bharata's line, that damsel of celestial beauty hath been born in the house of Drupada. The faultless

Krishna of Prishata's line is destined to be the wife of you all. Ye mighty ones, go therefore to the capital of the Panchala and dwell ye there. There is no doubt that having obtained her as wife ye will be very happy.'

After Vyasa left, the Pandavas took leave of the Brahmana and proceeded towards Panchala. They met on the way numerous Brahmanas proceeding together. Those Brahmanas, who were all *Brahmacharis*, beholding the Pandavas asked them: 'Whither do ye go? Whence also are ye come?' And Yudhishtira replied: 'Know ye that we are brothers travelling with our mother. We are coming even from Ekachakra.' The Brahmanas then said: 'Go ye this very day to the abode of Drupada in the country of the Panchalas. A great *Swayamvara* is going to take place there when money will be spent lavishly. We are also going thither. Let us go together. There will be grand festivities in Drupada's abode. The illustrious Yajnasena, otherwise called Drupada, has a daughter who rose out of the sacrificial altar. With eyes like lotus and features without a flaw, endued with youth and intelligence, she is extremely beautiful. The slender-waisted Draupadi of perfectly faultless features whose body emitteth a fragrance like unto that of the blue lotus for full two miles around is the sister of the strong-armed Dhrishtadyumna, gifted with great prowess—the (would be) slayer of Drona—who was born with natural mail, sword, bow and arrows from the blazing fire, himself like unto a second Fire. That daughter of Yajnasena will choose a husband from among the invited princes, and we are repairing thither to behold her and the festivities on the occasion which are like unto the festivities of heaven. And to that *Swayamvara* will come from various lands kings and princes who are performers of sacrifices in which large presents are given to the Brahmanas; kings who are devoted to study, are holy, illustrious, and of rigid vows; who are young and handsome; and who are mighty charioteers accomplished in arms. And to win the maiden, those monarchs will give away as presents much wealth, kine, food

and other useful articles. There will also come unto that *Swayamvara*, from various countries, actors, dancers, bards singing the panegyrics of kings, reciters of Puranas, heralds and powerful athletes. Beholding all these sights and taking the gifts that will be given, ye illustrious ones, ye will return with us. Ye are all handsome and like unto the celestials. Beholding ye, Krishna may even choose some one amongst ye. This thy handsome brother of mighty arms (Bhima) may have also a chance of earning great wealth in athletic encounters.'

On hearing these words of the Brahmanas, Yudhishtira replied: 'Ye Brahmanas, we will all go with ye to witness the maiden's *Swayamvara*—that excellent jubilee.'

DRAUPADI'S SWAYAMVARA

Vaisampayana said: "The Pandavas, O Janamejaya, proceeded towards the country of the southern Panchalas ruled over by King Drupada. They took up their quarters in the house of a potter and led the life of Brahmana mendicants; and their identity was not discovered by any one in Drupada's capital.

Yajnasena had long cherished the idea of bestowing his daughter on Kiriti (Arjuna), the son of Pandu. But he never disclosed his wish to any one. He caused a very stiff bow to be made which none but Arjuna could bend. A disc revolving in the air was also erected with a target attached to it.

'Whoever strings this bow and with these well adorned arrows shoots the mark above the machine, he shall win my daughter,' proclaimed King Drupada.

Learning of this, princely suitors from other lands flocked to his capital. There came also many illustrious *Rishis* desirous of beholding the *Swayamvara*. Duryodhana and other Kurus accompanied by Karna were there; and there were also many eminent Brahmanas from other lands. Eager to witness the *Swayamvara*, the citizens, humming like

the roaring sea, filled the galleries that had been erected around the amphitheatre which had been built on an auspicious and level plain to the north-east of Drupada's capital. That spacious amphitheatre was enclosed on all sides by high walls and a moat, with arched doorways here and there. Shaded by a canopy of various colours it reverberated with the notes of thousands of trumpets. The perfume of the black aloe filled the air; water mixed with sandal paste had been sprinkled everywhere and the place was decked with festoons of flowers. All around there were lofty mansions, perfectly white, resembling the cloud-kissing peaks of Kailasa, with casements covered with a network of gold and walls sparkling with diamonds and other gems. The staircases were easy of ascent and the floors were covered with rich carpets. White and spotless like the neck of the swan, these mansions were decorated with garlands of flowers and fragrant with the perfume of excellent aloes which could be felt from a distance of a *Yojana*. They had a hundred doors each, wide enough to admit a crowd. And they were furnished with costly beds and carpets. In such seven-storeyed houses of various sizes were accommodated the princely invitees of Drupada.

Entering that amphitheatre the Pandavas sat with the Brahmanas and noted the unsurpassed affluence of the king of the Panchalas. And that concourse of princes, Brahmanas and others began to increase day by day. And it continued, O king, for several days, till on the sixteenth day, when the amphitheatre was fully packed, the daughter of Drupada, after taking the ceremonial bath, entered the arena in gorgeous apparel, adorned with every ornament and bearing in her hand a plate of gold (whereon were the usual offerings of the *Arghya*) and a garland of flowers. Then the priest of the lunar race—a holy Brahmana conversant with all *mantras*—lighting the sacrificial fire poured, with due rites, libations of clarified butter on it. After *Agni* was thus propitiated and the Brahmanas had chanted the auspicious words of benediction, the music ceased playing. And when that

vast amphitheatre became perfectly still, Dhrishtadyumna, taking his sister by the arm, stood up in the midst of that concourse and said, in a voice loud and deep as that of the clouds, these pleasant words of great import: 'Hear ye assembled kings! This is the bow, that is the mark, and these are the arrows. Shoot the mark through the revolving ring by means of these five sharpened arrows. Truly do I say that, possessed of lineage, beauty of person and strength, whoso accomplisheth this great feat shall win to-day this my sister, Krishna, for his wife.' Having spoken thus unto the assembled monarchs, Drupada's son recited unto his sister the names, lineage and achievements of those assembled lords of the earth.

Then those youthful princes vying with one another, and each priding himself on his proficiency in arms and valour, stood up brandishing their weapons. Intoxicated with pride of beauty, prowess, lineage, learning, wealth and youth, they were like Himalayan elephants in the season of rut with crowns split from excess of juice. Eyeing each other with jealousy and influenced by the god of desire, they suddenly rose up from their royal seats exclaiming 'Krishna shall be mine'; and, with hearts quite lost in the contemplation of Krishna, those princes descended into the amphitheatre for winning the Panchala maiden and regarded even their best friends with jealousy.

There came to witness the event the gods in their chariots, with the Rudras, the Adityas, the Vasus, the twin Aswinas, the Swadhas, all the Marutas, and Kubera with Yama walking ahead. Halayudha (Baladeva), Janardhana (Krishna) and the chief of the Vrishni, Andhaka, and Yadava tribes who obeyed the leadership of Krishna, were also there. And marking the five Pandavas attracted towards Draupadi like mighty elephants drawn to a lake overgrown with lotus or like fire covered with ashes, Krishna, the foremost of Yadu heroes, began to reflect. And he said unto Rama (Baladeva): 'That is Yudhishtira; that is Bhima with Jishnu (Arjuna); and those are the twin heroes.'

Then those princes, Karna, Duryodhana, Salwa, Salya, Aswathama, Kratha, Sunitha, Vakra, the ruler of Kalinga and Banga, Pandya, Paundra, the ruler of Videha, the chief of the Yavanas, and many others—sons and grandsons of kings, sovereigns of territories, with eyes like lotus—one after another, tried their might to bend the bow and win that maiden of unrivalled beauty. But they could not, even in imagination, string that bow of extraordinary stiffness.

Some of the kings in straining with swelling lips to string the bow, were tossed on the ground by the recoil and lay perfectly motionless for some time. Their strength spent and their crowns and necklaces loosened from their persons, they began to pant for breath and their ardour for winning that fair maiden cooled. Their hope of obtaining Krishna gone, that assemblage of monarchs looked dejected. Beholding the plight of those monarchs, Karna, that foremost of all wielders of the bow, then approached the bow; and, quickly lifting it, he strung it and placed the arrows on the string. But, seeing Karna, Draupadi loudly said: 'I will not have a Suta for my lord.' Then Karna, laughing in vexation and looking up at the Sun, threw aside the bow which he had already drawn to a circle.

At last, when all the monarchs had thus become the laughing stock of that august assembly, that foremost of heroes—Jishnu, the son of Kunti—rose from among the group of Brahmanas seated in the assembly. At the sight of Partha, possessing the complexion of Indra's banner, advancing towards the bow, the principal Brahmanas shaking their deer-skins raised a loud clamour. While some were displeased, there were others that were quite pleased. Addressing one another some said: 'How can a Brahmana stripling, unpractised in arms and weak in strength, string that bow which such celebrated Kshatriyas as Salya and others endued with might and accomplished in the science and practice of arms could not do? If he doth not succeed in this hitherto unaccomplished task which he hath undertaken in a boyish spirit, the entire body of Brahmanas here

will become ridiculous in the eyes of the assembled monarchs. Therefore, forbid this Brahmana to attempt to string the bow which he is even now desirous of doing from vanity, childish bravado, or mere waywardness.' Some remarked: 'This handsome youth, who is even like the trunk of a mighty elephant, whose shoulders, arms and thighs are so well developed, who in patience looks like the Himavat, whose gait is even like that of the lion, whose prowess seems to be like that of an elephant in rut, and who is so resolute, will in all probability accomplish this feat.' Besides, there is nothing in the three worlds that Brahmanas cannot accomplish. Abstaining from all food or living upon air or eating of fruits, persevering in their vows, emaciated and weak, Brahmanas are ever strong in their own energy. Rama, the son of *Jamadagni*, defeated in battle all the Kshatriyas. Agastya, by his Brahma energy, drank up the fathomless ocean. Therefore, say ye: 'May this youth bend the bow and string it with ease.'

Then Arjuna approached the bow and stood there for a moment motionless like a mountain. And walking round the bow in homage and bending his head low unto that Bestower of boons, the lord Isana, and with his mind fixed on Krishna, he lifted it up. That bow which Rukma, Sunitha, Sakra, Radha's son, Duryodhana, Salya, and many other kings accomplished in the science and practice of arms could not in spite of great exertion string, Arjuna stringed in the twinkling of an eye. And taking up the five arrows he shot the mark and caused it to fall down on the ground through the hole in the machine above which it had been placed. Then there arose a loud uproar in the firmament and the amphitheatre resounded with thunderous applause. And the gods showered celestial flowers on the head of Partha. Thousands of Brahmanas began to wave their upper garments in joy. And all around, the monarchs who had been unsuccessful uttered groans of grief and despair. Flowers were rained from the skies all over the amphitheatre; musicians struck up in concert; bards and heralds began to chant

in sweet tones the paens of the hero who had accomplished the feat; and Drupada was filled with joy. When the tumult was at its height, Yudhishtira, accompanied by the twins, quickly left the amphitheatre. And Draupadi, beholding the mark shot and beholding also Partha like unto Indra himself, was filled with joy, and smiling approached the son of Kunti with a white robe and a garland of flowers. And Arjuna who was greeted with reverence by all the Brahmanas left the lists soon after, followed close by her who had thus become his bride.

Vaisampayana continued: "When King Drupada announced his intention of bestowing his daughter on the Brahmana who had shot the mark, the monarchs who had been invited to the *Swayamvara* looked at one another and became furious. They said: 'Passing us all by as if the assembled monarchs were straw this Drupada desireth to bestow his daughter—that first of women—on a Brahmana ! The wretch regardeth us not; therefore, let us slay him. He deserveth not our respect nor the veneration due to age. In this assemblage of monarchs like unto a conclave of the celestials, doth he not see a single monarch equal unto himself? The Vedic declaration is clear that the *Swayamvara* is for Kshatriyas only, and Brahmanas have no place in the choice of a husband by a Kshatriya damsel. Ye kings, if this damsel desireth not to select any one of us as her lord, let us cast her into the fire and return to our kingdoms. As regards this Brahmana, although he hath, from officiousness or avarice, done this injury to the monarchs, he should not yet be slain; for our kingdoms, treasure, lives, sons, grandsons and whatever else we have, all exist for Brahmanas. Something must, however, be done even unto him in order to safeguard what properly belongeth unto each order and so that other *Swayamvaras* may not, in future, conclude in this way.'

Having addressed one another thus, they took up their weapons and rushed at Drupada to slay him then and there. Beholding those monarchs all at once heading towards him

in anger with bows and arrows, Drupada sought the protection of the Brahmanas. But those mighty bowmen, Bhima and Arjuna, advanced to oppose those monarchs rushing impetuously like elephants in the season of rut. The monarchs with upraised weapons charged in anger at the Kuru princes, Bhima and Arjuna. Then mighty Bhima, possessing the force of thunder, tore up, like an elephant, a large tree and stood, like unto the mace-bearing monarch of the dead, armed with his fierce mace, near Arjuna, who undaunted was ready with his bow to meet the assailants. Beholding those feats of both Jishnu (Arjuna) and his brother, Damodara (Krishna) addressing his brother, Halayudha (Baladeva), said: 'That hero there, with the gait of a mighty lion, who draweth the large bow in his hand four full cubits in length is Arjuna. There is no doubt of this, Sankarshana, if I am Vasudeva. That other hero who having speedily torn up the tree hath suddenly got ready to drive off the monarchs is Vrikodara. For, no one in the world, except Vrikodara, could to-day perform such a feat in the field of battle. That other youth, full four cubits in height, with lotus-like eyes, gait like that of a mighty lion, and humble withal, of fair complexion and prominent and shining nose, who left the amphitheatre a little while ago is Dharma's son (Yudhishtira). The two other youths, like unto Kartikeya, are, I suspect, the sons of the twin Aswins. I have heard that the sons of Pandu, along with their mother Pritha, all escaped from the conflagration of the house of lac.' And Halayudha said with great satisfaction: 'I am happy to hear that our father's sister Pritha and the foremost of the Kaurava princes have all escaped from death.'

Then the Brahmanas flourishing their deer-skins and water-pots made of cocoanut-shells exclaimed: 'Fear not, we will fight the foe !' But Arjuna said with a smile: 'Stand ye aside. Showering hundreds of arrows furnished with straight points I shall easily check, like snakes with *mantras*, all those angry monarchs.' Having said this, the mighty Arjuna, taking up the bow he had obtained as dower and

supported by his brother Bhima, stood immoveable as a mountain. Then those monarchs eager for the fray fiercely exclaimed: 'The slaughter in battle of a Brahmana desiring to fight is permitted.' Saying this, the monarchs suddenly rushed against the Brahmanas. Karna endued with great energy made straight for Jishnu; and Salya, the mighty king of the Madras, charged at Bhima like one elephant rushing against another for the sake of a she-elephant; while Duryodhana and others engaged with the Brahmanas and skirmished with them lightly and carelessly. Beholding Karna advancing towards him, Arjuna drew his tough bow and pierced him with sharp arrows which made Radheya (Karna) faint. Recovering consciousness Karna attacked Arjuna more cautiously than before. Then Karna and Arjuna, both foremost of victorious warriors, desirous of vanquishing each other, fought madly on. And such was the lightness of hand they both displayed that (each enveloped by the other's shower of arrows) they both became invisible unto the spectators. 'Behold the strength of my arms!' 'Mark, how I have counteracted that feat'—those were the words, intelligible to heroes alone, in which they addressed each other. Parrying all the irresistible arrows shot at him by Arjuna, Karna sent up a loud shout, and this feat of his was applauded by all the warriors. Then, addressing his antagonist, Karna said: 'Thou foremost of Brahmanas, I am pleased to observe the energy of thy arms that knoweth no relaxation in battle and to see thy weapons themselves fit for achieving victory. Art thou the embodiment of the science of weapons, or art thou Rama, that best of Brahmanas, or Indra himself, or Indra's younger brother Vishnu called also Achyuta, who hath assumed the form of a Brahmana and mustering such might of arms fighteth with me? No other person except the husband of Sachi himself or Kiriti, the son of Pandu, is capable of fighting with me when I am roused on the field of battle.' And Phalguna replied: 'Karna, I am neither the science of arms (personified) nor Rama of superhuman powers. I am only a

Brahmana. By the grace of my preceptor I have become accomplished in the *Brahma* and the *Paurandara* weapons. I am here to vanquish thee in battle.'

Thus addressed by Arjuna, Karna desisted from the fight, for that mighty car-warrior thought that *Brahma* energy was ever invincible. Meanwhile, on another part of the field, the mighty heroes Salya and Vrikodara, well skilled in battle and possessed of great strength and proficiency, challenging each other, were engaged in fighting like two excited elephants. They struck each other with clenched fists and knees, and the lists rang with the sounds of their combat. Fighting with each other thus for a few seconds, Bhima taking up Salya on his arms hurled him to a distance. When Salya was thus thrown down and Karna was struck with fear, the other monarchs were all alarmed. They quickly surrounded Bhima and exclaimed: 'Surely these Brahmanas are excellent fighters! Ascertain to what race they belong and where they abide. Who can encounter Karna, the son of Radha, in battle except Rama or Drona, or Kiriti, the son of Pandu? Who also can encounter Duryodhana in battle except Krishna, the son of Devaki, and Kripa, the son of Saradwan? Who also can overthrow Salya—that first of mighty warriors—except the hero Baladeva or Vrikodara, the son of Pandu, or the heroic Duryodhana? Let us, therefore, stop fighting with the Brahmanas. Indeed, Brahmanas, however offending, should yet be ever protected. Let us first ascertain who these are; after we have done that we may gladly fight with them.'

Vaisampayana continued: "And Krishna then gently addressing the assembled monarchs said: 'This maiden hath been justly won by the Brahmana.' And he persuaded them to abandon the fight.

Meanwhile, seeing that her sons were late in returning from their daily round Kunti was filled with anxiety. Her mind began to conjure up the various evils that may have overtaken her sons. One moment she thought that the sons of Dhritharashtra having recognised her children might have

slain them. And she asked herself, 'Could the illustrious Vyasa who had directed my sons to go to Panchala have been misguided himself?' At last, in the stillness of the late afternoon, Jishnu accompanied by a body of Brahmanas entered the abode of the potter, like the sun emerging from the clouds on a cloudy day."

DRAUPADI BECOMES THE COMMON WIFE OF THE PANDAVAS

Vaisampayana said: "Then those illustrious sons of Pritha approached their mother and presented Yajnaseni as the *alms* they had obtained that day. And Kunti who was inside the room and saw not her sons replied: 'Enjoy ye all (what ye have obtained).' A moment later, she beheld Krishna and then she said in alarm: 'Oh, what have I said!' For fear of committing sin, and reflecting how every one could be extricated from the awkward situation, she took the cheerful Yajnaseni by the hand and approaching Yudhishtira said: 'This daughter of King Yajnasena upon being represented to me by thy younger brothers as the *alms* they had obtained, from ignorance, I said as usual: '*Enjoy ye all what hath been obtained.*' Tell me now how my speech may not become untrue, how sin may not touch the daughter of the king of Panchala, and how also she may not become unhappy.'

Thus addressed by his mother, the intelligent Yudhishtira, reflecting for a moment, consoled Kunti, and addressing Dhananjaya said: 'By thee, Phalguna, hath Yajnaseni been won. It is proper, therefore, thou shouldst wed her. Lighting the sacred fire take thou her hand with due rites.'

Arjuna, hearing this, replied: 'Do not make me a participator in sin. Thy behest is not in conformity with *Dharma*. Thou shouldst wed first, then the strong-armed Bhima, then myself, then Nakula, and last Sahadeva.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Hearing these words of Jishnu, so full of respect and affection, the Pandavas all

glanced at the princess of Panchala. And the princess of Panchala also looked at them. Such was the beauty of Panchali that it could captivate the heart of any one. And Yudhishtira, observing his younger brothers, understood what was passing in their minds. Immediately, recollecting the words of Krishna-Dwaipayana, he said: 'The auspicious Draupadi shall be the common wife of us all.'

Suspecting that the five persons he had seen at the *Swayamvara* could be no other than the heroes of the Kuru race, Krishna came, accompanied by Baladeva, to the house of the potter and beheld, seated in that potter's house, Ajatasatru (Yudhishtira) of well-developed and long arms and his younger brothers, surpassing the splendour of fire, sitting around him. Then Vasudeva approaching that prince of the Ajamida race and touching his feet said: 'I am Krishna.' Then they touched the feet of Kunti, their father's sister. And Ajatasatru enquired after his welfare and asked: 'How, Vasudeva, hast thou been able to trace us, disguised as we are?' And Vasudeva answered with a smile: 'King, fire can be known even when covered. Who among men, other than the Pandavas, could exhibit such might? Ye sons of Pandu, by sheer good fortune have ye escaped from the fierce fire. Grow ye in prosperity, like a fire in a cave gradually increasing and spreading itself all around. And lest any of the monarchs recognise ye, permit us to return to our tent.' Taking leave of Yudhishtira, Krishna then quickly left the house.

When Bhima and Arjuna were wending towards the abode of the potter, Dhrishtadyumna, the Panchala prince, followed them. Sending away all his attendants, he concealed himself in the potter's house, unknown to the Pandavas.

When morning came, the prince left his place of concealment in great haste in order to report to Drupada in detail all that had happened at the potter's abode and all that he had heard those heroes saying to one another during the night. The king of Panchala had been sad, as he knew not as the Pandavas those who had taken away his daughter.

And the illustrious monarch asked Dhrishtadyumna on his return: 'Oh, where hath Krishna gone? Who hath taken her away? Hath any Sudra or anyone of low descent or a tribute-paying Vaisya, by taking my daughter away, placed his foul foot on my head? Son, hath that bouquet of flowers been thrown away on a graveyard? Or hath any Kshatriya of high birth or any one of the superior order (Brahmana) obtained my daughter? I would not grieve, but feel very happy indeed, if my daughter hath been united with Partha, that foremost of men. Tell me truly who hath won my daughter to-day. Are the sons of that foremost of Kurus, Vichitravirya's son, alive? Was it Partha that took up the bow and shot the mark?'

Vaisampayana said: "Thus addressed, Dhrishtadyumna cheerfully recounted to his father all that he had observed. The prince said: 'Before going to sleep they talked on diverse subjects in voices deep as if they emanated from black clouds. Judging from the talk of those heroes they could be neither Vaisyas nor Sudras, nor Brahmanas. Without doubt, O monarch, they are bulls amongst Kshatriyas, their conversation having been largely on military subjects. It seems, father, that our hope hath borne fruit, for we have heard that the sons of Kunti all escaped from the conflagration of the house of lac. From the way in which the mark was shot down by that youth, the vigour with which the bow was strung by him, and the manner in which I heard them talk with one another it is certain that they are the sons of Pritha wandering in disguise.'

Hearing these words of his son, King Drupada became exceedingly glad and he sent his priest unto them directing him to ascertain who they were and whether they were the sons of the illustrious Pandu. Thus directed, the king's priest went unto them and duly delivered the king's message.

And Yudhishtira said to the priest: 'The king of the Panchalas hath, by fixing a special kind of wager, given away his daughter according to the practice of his order. This hero hath, by satisfying that demand, won the princess.

Indeed, all the king's queries have been answered by the stringing of the bow and the shooting down of the mark. The desire that King Drupada hath all along cherished will be fulfilled, for this handsome princess beareth, I ween, every auspicious mark. None that is weak in strength could string that bow, and none of mean birth and unaccomplished in arms could have shot down the mark. It behoveth not, therefore, the king of the Panchalas to grieve for his daughter to-day.'

While Yudhishtira was saying all this, another messenger from the king of the Panchalas coming thither in haste announced: 'The wedding feast is ready.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Hearing from his priest what Yudhishtira had said, King Drupada, in order to make sure of the order to which those heroes belonged, kept ready a large collection of articles (required by the ordinance for the wedding of each of the four orders)—fruits, sanctified garlands, coats of mail, shields, carpets, kine, seeds, and various other articles and implements of agriculture. There were also swords and scimitars of fine temper, beautiful chariots and horses, excellent bows and well-adorned arrows, and various kinds of missiles ornamented with gold together with darts, rockets, battle-axes and various other weapons of war. When the bridal party went to Drupada's abode, Kunti accompanied by the virtuous Draupadi entered the inner apartments of the king. The ladies of the king's household with joyous hearts respectfully welcomed the queen of the Kurus. Beholding those foremost of men, each possessing the sportive gait of the lion, with deer-skins for their upper garments, eyes like unto those of mighty bulls, broad-shoulders, and long hanging arms like unto the bodies of mighty snakes, the king, his ministers, his son, his friends and attendants were all overjoyed. Those heroes sat on the magnificent seats provided with footstools without showing any awkwardness, hesitation or fear. When they were seated, well dressed servants and skilful cooks brought costly viands, worthy of kings, on gold and silver plates. After

the dinner was finished, passing over all other articles, they began to observe with interest the various weapons of war. Noticing this, Drupada's son and Drupada himself, along with all his ministers, inferred they were of royal blood and were greatly pleased.

Then the illustrious king of the Panchala, addressing prince Yudhishtira in the form appropriate to Brahmanas, enquired of that illustrious son of Kunti: 'Are we to know ye as Kshatriyas or Brahmanas, or are we to know ye as celestials who disguising themselves as Brahmanas are ranging the Earth and are come hither for the hand of Krishna? O tell us true that we may surely know. I shall make arrangements for my daughter's wedding according to the order to which ye belong.'

Yudhishtira answered: 'Be not cheerless, O king; let thy heart rejoice. The desire cherished by thee hath certainly been fulfilled. We are Kshatriyas and sons of the illustrious Pandu. Thy daughter, O monarch, hath like a lotus been transferred only from one lake to another.'

So overcome with delight was the king that he was unable for a few moments to speak. At last, controlling his emotions with great effort, he enquired how the Pandavas had managed to escape from the town of Varanavata; and the son of Pandu told the monarch in detail of their escape from the burning palace of lac. Hearing everything that the son of Kunti said, King Drupada condemned Dhritharashtra and then and there vowed to help Yudhishtira to regain his paternal throne.

King Drupada then approaching Yudhishtira said: 'Let the Kuru prince Arjuna take, with due rites, the hand of my daughter on this auspicious day, and let him, therefore, perform the usual initiatory rites of marriage.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Hearing these words of Drupada, Yudhishtira replied: 'Thy daughter, O king, shall be the common wife of us all. Even thus it hath been ordered, O monarch, by our mother. Krishna, therefore,

shall become the wedded wife of us all. Let her take our hands, one after another, before the fire.'

Drupada answered: 'Scion of Kuru's race, it hath been decreed that one man may have many wives. But it hath never been heard that one woman may have many husbands! Pure as thou art and acquainted with the rules of morality, it behoveth thee not to commit an act that is sinful and opposed both to usage and the *Vedas*.'

Yudhishtira said in reply: 'O monarch, morality is subtle. We do not know its course. Let us follow the path taken by the illustrious ones of former ages. My tongue never uttered an untruth. My heart also never turneth to anything sinful. My mother commandeth so; and my heart also approveth of it.'

Then Yudhishtira, Kunti and Dhrishtadyumna discussed the matter further. Just at that time, however, Vyasa happened to come there in the course of his wanderings.

And the Pandavas, the illustrious king of the Panchalas and others who were there stood up and reverentially received the illustrious *Rishi*. The high souled *Rishi*, greeting them in return and enquiring after their welfare, sat down on a carpet of gold. Then the son of Prishata softly asked the illustrious *Rishi*: 'How, illustrious one, can one woman become the wife of many men without being defiled by sin?' Vyasa replied: 'This practice, king, being opposed to usage and the *Vedas* hath become obsolete. I desire, however, to hear the opinion of each of you upon this matter.'

Drupada speaking first said: 'The practice is sinful in my opinion, being opposed to both usage and the *Vedas*. O best of Brahmanas, nowhere have I seen many men having one wife. The illustrious ones also of former ages never had such a usage amongst them. Indeed, this practice appeareth to me to be of doubtful morality.'

Yudhishtira then spoke: 'My tongue never uttereth an untruth and my heart never inclineth to what is sinful. When my heart approveth of it, it can never be sinful. I have heard in the *Purana* that a woman by the name of

Jatila, the foremost of all virtuous women, belonging to the race of Gotama, married seven *Rishis*. So also an ascetic's daughter had in former times united herself in marriage with ten brothers, all bearing the same name of Prachetas and who were all souls exalted by ascetism. Moreover, O foremost of all that are acquainted with the rules of morality, it is said that obedience to superiors is ever meritorious. Amongst all such persons, it is well known that one's mother is the foremost. And she hath commanded us to hold Draupadi even as we do anything obtained as *alms*. It is for these reasons that I regard the proposed course as right.'

Kunti then spoke: 'It is even so as the virtuous Yudhishthira hath said. I greatly fear, O Brahmana, lest my speech become untrue. How shall I be saved from untruth?'

When they had all finished speaking, Vyasa said: 'I will not discourse on this before you all. But thou alone shalt listen to me when I disclose how this practice hath been established and why it is to be regarded as old and eternal.'

Then the illustrious Vyasa rose, and taking hold of Drupada's hand led him into a private apartment.

Vyasa continued: 'They who have been born as the Pandavas are none else than those Indras of old. And the celestial Sree herself who had been ordained as their wife is this Draupadi of matchless beauty. How could she whose effulgence is like that of the sun or the moon and whose fragrance spreads for two miles around draw her birth except in an extraordinary way, namely, from within the Earth, by virtue of sacrificial rites? Unto thee, O king, I cheerfully grant this other boon in the form of spiritual sight. Behold now the sons of Kunti endued with their sacred and celestial bodies of old!'

Vaisampayana said: "Drupada, on hearing this, observed: 'Now, that I know all, I cannot be indifferent to what hath been ordained by the gods. Therefore do I resolve to accomplish what thou hast said. The knot of destiny cannot be untied. Let these with happy hearts take, as ordained, the hand of Krishna in accordance with the rites.'

After their wedding was over, the sons of Pandu passed their days happily in the capital of the king of the Panchalas."

THE DILEMMA

Hearing that Draupadi had selected the owner of white steeds (Arjuna) as her lord, Duryodhana became very depressed. Accompanied by his brothers, Aswathaman, his uncle (Sakuni), Karna and Kripa, the prince set out for his capital with a heavy heart. Beholding the mighty sons of Pritha who had escaped from the burning house of lac and were now allied with Drupada, and thinking of Dhrishtadyumna, Sikhandin and the other sons of Drupada, all seasoned warriors, they were struck with fear and overcome with despair.

When Vidura learnt that Draupadi had been won by the Pandavas and that the sons of Dhritharashtra had come back humiliated, he was filled with joy. Approaching Dhritharashtra he said: 'The Kurus are indeed blessed with luck!' Hearing these words of Vidura, Dhritharashtra, highly pleased, asked eagerly: 'What good luck, O Vidura? What good luck?' The blind monarch concluded wrongly that his eldest son Duryodhana had been chosen by Drupada's daughter as her lord. He immediately ordered several ornaments to be made for Draupadi and commanded that both Draupadi and Duryodhana should be brought with all pomp to Hastinapura. Vidura, however, enlightened the monarch that Draupadi had chosen the Pandavas for her lords, that those heroes were all alive and well, that they had been received with great respect by King Drupada and that the Pandavas had thus been united with the many relatives and friends of Drupada, each owning large armies, and with many others who had come to that *Swayamvara*.

Hearing these words of Vidura, Dhritharashtra remarked: 'Those children are to me, O Kshatri, as dear as they were to Pandu—nay, more. They have obtained many friends. Their relatives and others whom they have

secured as allies are all powerful. Who, O Kshatri, amongst monarchs in prosperity or adversity would not like to have Drupada with his relatives for an ally ?'

Vaisampayana continued: "Vidura then said: 'O king, may thy understanding remain so for a hundred years !' Having said this Vidura returned to his own abode.

Then, there came unto Dhritarashtra, Duryodhana and Karna, the son of Radha. Addressing the monarch, they said: 'We cannot, O King, criticise thee in the presence of Vidura. Now that we are alone we can speak freely. What is it that thou desirest to do ? Dost thou regard the prosperity of thy foes as thy own, that thou hast been applauding the Pandavas before Vidura ? Thou actest not in the way thou shouldst. Father, methinks we should now work ceaselessly in such a way as to reduce the power of the Pandavas. The time hath come, father, for us to take counsel together, so that the Pandavas may not swallow us all with our children, allies and relatives.'

Dhritarashtra replied: 'I am also anxious to do even as you suggest. But I do not wish to reveal it to Vidura even by the movement of a muscle. That was why, son, I was praising the Pandavas in Vidura's presence, so that he might not have an inkling of what is in my mind. Now that Vidura hath gone away, thou canst, Suyodhana, tell me what thou hast hit upon and what, Radheya, thou too hast hit upon.'

Duryodhana said: 'Let us, father, by means of trusted, skilful and adroit Brahmanas seek to produce dissensions between the sons of Kunti and those of Madri. Or let King Drupada, his sons and his ministers of state be tempted with presents of large wealth, so that they may abandon the cause of Yudhishtira. Or let our spies persuade the Pandavas to settle in Drupada's dominions, by representing to them, individually, the inconvenience of residing in Hastinapura. Or, let some clever and resourceful spies sow the seeds of dissension among the Pandavas and make them jealous of one another. Or, let them incite Krishna against her hus-

bands. She has many lords and this should not therefore present any difficulty. Or, let some seek to make the Pandavas themselves dissatisfied with Krishna, in which case Krishna also will be dissatisfied with them. Or, let, O King, some clever spies secretly compass the death of Bhimasena. Bhima is the strongest of them all. Without him, their sole refuge, they will no longer strive to regain their kingdom. Arjuna is invincible in battle only if Bhima protecteth him from behind. Without Bhima, Arjuna is not equal to even a fourth part of Radheya. Or if, coming hither, they prove docile and obedient to us, we could then seek to suppress them through diplomacy as indicated by Kanika. Or, we may tempt them with pretty girls, which will make the princess of Panchala get annoyed with them. Or, let messengers be despatched so that, bringing them hither, we may, through trusted agents, cause them to be slain. These are my views for the discomfiture of the Pandavas. Judge whether they be good or bad. What, Karna, dost thou think ?

Vaisampayana said: "Thus addressed by Duryodhana, Karna spoke: 'It doth not seem to me, Duryodhana, that thy reasoning is well-founded. Brave prince, thou hast, by various subtle means, striven before to accomplish thy purpose; but ever hast thou failed to slay thy foes. They were then living near thee; they were then unfledged and of tender years; and yet thou couldst not injure them. They are now living at a distance and grown up. The sons of Kunti cannot now be injured by any subtle contrivances of thine. This is my opinion.

It is impossible to create disunion amongst them. They can never be separated who have all taken to a common wife. Nor can we succeed in estranging Krishna from the Pandavas through any spies of ours. She chose them as her lords when they were in adversity. Will she abandon them now that they are in prosperity? The king of Panchala is honest and virtuous. He is not avaricious. Even if we offer him our whole kingdom he will not abandon the Pandavas. Drupada's

son also possesseth every accomplishment and is attached to the Pandavas. Therefore, I do not think that the Pandavas can now be injured by any subtle means in thy power. What seems most appropriate now is for us to attack and smite them till they are exterminated. As long as our party is strong and that of the king of the Panchalas is weak, so long strike them without any scruples. And, O King, exert thy prowess before he of the Vrishni race, namely, Krishna, cometh with the Yadava host into the city of Drupada, carrying everything before him, to restore the Pandavas to their paternal kingdom. Wealth, every means of enjoyment, kingdom, there is nothing that Krishna will not sacrifice for the sake of the Pandavas. The illustrious Bharata acquired the whole Earth by his prowess alone. Indra hath acquired sovereignty of the three worlds by prowess alone. Prowess in Kshatriyas is ever applauded by the world. Let us, therefore, O monarch, with our large army crush Drupada without loss of time and bring hither the Pandavas. O monarch, I see no other means by which we may accomplish our end.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Hearing these words of Radheya, Dhritharashtra applauded him highly and said: 'Thou art, son of a *Suta*, gifted with great wisdom and accomplished in arms. This speech, therefore, favouring the exhibition of prowess is worthy of thee. But let Bhishma, Drona, Vidura and you two take counsel together and let us adopt such measures as may lead to our benefit.'

Then King Dhritharashtra called unto him all those celebrated ministers and took counsel with them."

DHRITHARASHTRA TAKES COUNSEL

Asked by Dhritharashtra to give his opinion, Bhishma replied: 'A quarrel with the Pandavas is what I can never approve of. As thou art to me, so was Pandu without doubt. And the sons of Gandhari are to me as those of Kunti. I should protect them as well as thy sons. Under these

circumstances, a quarrel with them can never be to my liking. Make peace with those heroes and let half the land be given unto them. It is, without doubt, the paternal kingdom of those foremost ones of the Kuru race. And, O Duryodhana, like thee who lookest upon this kingdom as thy paternal property, the Pandavas also look upon it as their paternal possession. If the renowned sons of Pandu obtain not the kingdom, how can it be thine or that of any other descendant of the Bharata race? If thou regardest thyself as one that hath lawfully come into possession of the kingdom, I think they may also be regarded to have lawfully come into possession of this kingdom before thee. Give them half the kingdom quietly. If thou actest otherwise, evil will befall us all. Thou shalt besides be covered with dishonour. A good name is, indeed, the source of one's strength. It hath been said that one liveth in vain whose reputation hath gone. A man, O Kaurava, doth not die so long as his fame lasteth. Follow thou, O son of Gandhari, the course that is worthy of the Kuru race. We are fortunate that the Pandavas have not perished. We are fortunate that Kunti liveth. We are fortunate that the wretch Purochana failed to accomplish his fell purpose and hath himself perished. From the moment that I heard that the sons of Kuntibhoja's daughter were burnt to death, I was, O son of Gandhari, ill able to face any living creature. The world doth not hold Purochana so guilty as it doth thee. Know that, as long as those heroes live, the wielder of the thunder himself cannot deprive them of their ancestral share in the kingdom. The Pandavas are virtuous and united. They are being wrongly kept out of their equal share in the kingdom. If thou wouldst act rightly, if thou wouldst do what is agreeable to me, if thou wouldst seek the welfare of all, then give half the kingdom unto them.'

Vaisampayana continued: "After Bhishma had concluded, Drona spoke: 'O King Dhritharashtra, it hath been said that friends summoned for consultation should always speak what is right, true and conducive to good. O sire, I am of the same mind in this matter as the illustrious

Bhishma. Let a share of the kingdom be given unto the Pandavas. Send unto Drupada, without loss of time, some messenger, sweet of speech, with a large treasure for the Pandavas. Let him strongly propitiate the sons of Kunti and those of Madri. And, at thy command, let plenty of ornaments, made of pure gold, be given unto Draupadi. And let appropriate presents be given unto all the sons of Drupada. Let the messenger then propose the return of the Pandavas to Hastinapura. Let Dussasana and Vikarna go out with a handsome train to receive them. And when they arrive at Hastinapura, let those foremost of men be received with affection by thee. Let them then be installed on their paternal throne, agreeably to the wishes of the people of the realm. This, O monarch of Bharata's race, is what, in my view, should be thy attitude towards the Pandavas who are to thee even as thy own sons.'

After Drona had ceased, Karna spoke again: 'Both Bhishma and Drona have been pampered with wealth that is thine and with favours conferred by thee. They are also always regarded by thee as thy trusted friends. What can therefore be more surprising than that they should both give thee advice which is not for thy good? How can the wise approve of advice said to be good by a person speaking with wicked intent but taking care to conceal the wickedness of his heart?'

Hearing these words of Karna, Drona retorted: 'Wicked thyself, it is evident thou speakest thus from sinister intent. It is for injuring the Pandavas that thou findest fault with us. But know, Karna, that what I have said is for the good of all and the prosperity of the Kuru race. If thou regardest this as productive of evil, declare thyself what is for our good. If the good advice I have given be not followed, I think the Kurus will be wiped out in no time.'

Vidura then spoke: 'O monarch, thy friends without doubt are telling thee what is for thy good. But unwilling as thou art to give heed to what they say, their words scarcely find a place in thy ears. What that foremost

one of Kuru's race, namely, Bhishma, hath said, is sound and is for thy good. The preceptor Drona also hath said much that is for thy good, which, however, Karna doth not regard as such. But, O King, reflecting deeply I cannot find any one who is a better friend to thee than either of these two lions among men (Bhishma and Drona), or any who excels either of them in wisdom. These two, old in years, in wisdom and in learning, always regard thee and the sons of Pandu as equal. Never before have they given thee any evil advice. Thou also, O monarch, hast never done them any injury. Why should they, then, who are ever truthful, give thee wicked advice? Without doubt, O monarch, the Pandavas are thy sons as much as Duryodhana and the others are. Those ministers, therefore, that give thee any counsel fraught with evil unto the Pandavas do not really care for thy interests. What these bulls among men have said regarding the invincibility of the Pandavas is perfectly true. Can the handsome Dhananjaya using the right and the left hand with equal dexterity be vanquished in battle even by Maghavat himself? Can the great Bhimasena of strong arms possessing the might of ten thousand elephants be vanquished in battle by the immortals themselves? Who also that desireth to live would meet in battle the twins (Nakula and Sahadeva) like unto the sons of Yama himself, and well-skilled fighters? How too can the eldest of the Pandavas who is the personification of mercy, forgiveness, truth and prowess be vanquished? They who have Rama (Baladeva) as their ally, Janardana (Krishna) as their counsellor and Satyaki as their partisan, whom have they not already defeated in war? They who have Drupada for their father-in-law and Drupada's sons—the heroic brothers, Dhrishtadyumna and others of Prishata's race—for their brothers-in-law are certainly invincible. Remembering this, O monarch, and considering that their claim to the kingdom is even superior to thine, behave virtuously towards them. The stain of calumny is on thee already in consequence of that act of Purochana. Wash thyself of it now by kindly behaviour towards the Pandavas.

The *Dasarhas* are numerous and strong. Know that where Krishna is, all of them must be; and where Krishna is, there victory also must be. O king, who, unless cursed by the gods, would think of resorting to war to obtain what can be secured by conciliation? Hearing that the sons of Pritha are alive, the people of the realm are exceedingly pleased and are eager to see them. O monarch, act in a way agreeable to them. Duryodhana, Karna and Sakuni are wicked, foolish and young. Listen not to them. Possessed of every virtue though thou art, I warned thee long ago, O monarch, that for Duryodhana's folly the subjects of this kingdom would be annihilated.' "

VIDURA'S MISSION

Vaisampayana said: "After listening to them, Dhritharashtra spoke: 'The learned Bhishma, the illustrious *Rishi* Drona and thyself (O Vidura) have truly spoken what is best for me. Indeed, as the heroic sons of Kunti are the children of Pandu, so are they, without doubt, my children according to the ordinance. Just as my sons are entitled to this kingdom, so are surely the sons of Pandu. Therefore, hie thee, O Kshatri, and bring hither the Pandavas along with their mother, treating them with affectionate consideration; bring also Draupadi of celestial beauty along with them. It is providential that the sons of Pritha are alive; and it is from good fortune alone that those mighty car-warriors have won the daughter of Drupada.'

Then Vidura repaired unto Yajnasena and the Pandavas. In the name of Dhritharashtra he repeatedly enquired, with great affection, after their welfare. And after offering unto the Pandavas, Kunti, Draupadi, Drupada and his sons the jewels and other valuable presents that the Kauravas had sent through him, the modest Vidura in the presence of the Pandavas and Keshava addressed Drupada thus:

'With thy ministers and sons, O monarch, hearken to what I say. King Dhritharashtra, his ministers, sons and

friends have warmly and repeatedly enquired after thy welfare. This alliance with thee hath made them all happier than if they had acquired a new kingdom. O monarch, permit the Pandavas, therefore, to revisit their ancestral kingdom. The Kurus are very anxious to behold the sons of Pandu, who, as well as Pritha, must also be very eager to visit their home. All the Kuru ladies and the people of the State are eagerly expecting to see the Panchala Princess. This, therefore, is my opinion, O monarch, that thou shouldst, without delay, permit the Pandavas to go thither with their wife.'

Drupada replied: 'It is even as thou, O Vidura of great wisdom, hast said. Venerable one, I too am exceedingly happy in this alliance. It is quite appropriate that these illustrious princes should return to their ancestral kingdom. But it is not proper for me to suggest this myself. If the brave son of Kunti, Yudhishtira, if Bhima and Arjuna, and the twins themselves desire to go, and if Rama (Baladeva) and Krishna, both acquainted with every rule of conduct, be of the same mind, then let the Pandavas go thither.'

Hearing this, Yudhishtira said: 'We are now, O monarch, dependent on thee. We shall cheerfully do what thou art pleased to command.'

Then Vasudeva said: 'I think that the Pandavas should go. But we should all abide by the advice of King Drupada.'

Drupada then spoke: 'I certainly agree with what the heroic Dasarha of strong arms thinketh, having regard to the circumstances.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Accordingly, the Pandavas, Krishna and Vidura, taking with them the daughter of Drupada and the renowned Kunti left for the city called after the elephant. King Dhritharashtra, hearing that those heroes had approached the capital, sent the Kauravas to receive them. The whole city was radiant, as it were, with the gay throng of sight-seers animated by curiosity. And the Pandavas, dear unto the hearts of the people, heard, as they proceeded, various exclamations of welcome which the citizens loudly uttered. Some exclaimed: 'Here returns that

tiger among men, conversant with all the rules of morality and who always protects us as if we were his nearest kin.' Elsewhere some said: 'It looks as if King Pandu, beloved of his people, returneth to-day from the forest, doubtless to do what is good for us.' There were some that said: 'If we have ever given away in charity, if we have ever poured libations of clarified butter on the fire, if we have any ascetic merit, let the Pandavas by virtue of all those acts stay in our town for a hundred years.'

On arriving at the palace the Pandavas worshipped the feet of Dhritharashtra, as also those of the illustrious Bhishma and of every one else that deserved to be so honoured. And they enquired after the welfare of every one present there.

When they had rested for sometime, they were summoned to the court by King Dhritharashtra and Bhishma. And King Dhritharashtra addressing Yudhishtira said: 'Listen, O son of Kunti, with thy brothers to what I say. Repair ye to Khandavaprastha so that no misunderstanding may arise again between you and your cousins. Protected by Partha (Arjuna), like the celestials by the wielder of the thunderbolt, reside ye at Khandavaprastha taking half the kingdom.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Agreeing to what Dhritharashtra proposed and bowing to the king, they set out for Khandavaprastha which was then an unreclaimed desert. Selecting with Dwaipayana's assistance a sacred and auspicious region, they performed propitiatory ceremonies and measured out a site for their city. Surrounded by a moat, wide as the sea, and by walls soaring up to the heavens white as the fleecy clouds or the moonbeam, that foremost of cities looked resplendent like Bhogavati (the capital of the nether kingdom). Palatial mansions adorned the city which was protected with gateways looking like the clouds and high as the Mandara mountains. Well-furnished with numerous weapons of attack, the missiles of the foe could not make the slightest impression on them. The turrets along the walls were full of armed men under training. And the walls were

lined with numerous warriors along their whole length. There were thousands of sharp hooks, *Sataghnis* (machines which could kill a hundred warriors) and numerous other engines of destruction on the battlements. The streets were all wide and well laid out, and there was no risk of accident. Decked with innumerable white palaces, the city was like unto Amaravati and came to be called *Indraprastha* (like unto Indra's city). And in a delightful and auspicious part of the city stood the palace of the Pandavas, resembling a bank of clouds charged with lightning, filled with riches and like unto the mansion of the celestial treasurer (Kubera) himself.

When the city was built, there came to dwell there, O king, numerous Brahmanas learned in all the *Vedas* and knowing every language. There also flocked into that city, from far and near, numerous merchants and artisans of all classes in the hope of earning wealth.

All round the city there were laid out many beautiful parks adorned with numerous trees bearing both fruits and flowers. There were *Amras*, *Amratakas*, *Kadamvas*, *Asokas* and *Champakas*; *Punnagas*, *Nagas*, *Lakuchas* and *Panasas*; *Salas*, *Talas*, *Tamalas*, *Vakulas* and *Ketakas* with their fragrant loads; beautiful and blossoming grand *Amalakas* with branches bent down with the weight of fruits; *Lodhras* and blossoming *Ankolas*; *Jamvus*, *Patalas*, *Kunjakas* and *Atimuktas*; *Karaviras*, *Parijatas* and numerous other trees with perennial flowers and fruits and humming with a variety of feathery creatures. Pleasure-houses bright as mirrors, charming artificial hillocks, lakes full to the brim with crystal-clear water and tanks fragrant with lotuses and lilies and adorned with swans, ducks and *chakravakas* were there in plenty.

Thus, as a result of the righteous conduct of Bhishma and King Dhritharashtra, the Pandavas settled down in Khandavaprastha."

A HAPPY INTERVAL

Janamejaya said: "What did those high-souled ones—my grandsires, the illustrious Pandavas—do after obtaining

the kingdom of Indraprastha ? How did their wedded wife Draupadi conduct herself towards them all ? How is it that no dissensions arose amongst those illustrious rulers of men, all attached to *one* wife."

Vaisampayana said: "Having obtained their kingdom, the Pandavas passed their days happily at Khandavaprastha. And Yudhishtira, endued with great energy and ever adhering to truth, ruled the land well assisted by his brothers.

And one day there came unto them the celestial *Rishi* Narada in the course of his wanderings. After the heavenly *Rishi* had taken his seat, Yudhishtira duly offered him the *Arghya* with his own hands and apprised him of the state of his kingdom. And the king sent word unto Draupadi of the arrival of the illustrious one. Hearing of the *Rishi's* arrival, Draupadi came and worshipping the celestial *Rishi's* feet she stood with joined hands before him properly veiled. The illustrious Narada pronounced benedictions on her and commanded the princess to retire; and then addressing confidentially all the Pandavas with Yudhishtira at their head he said: 'The renowned princess of Panchala is the wedded wife of you all. Establish a rule among yourselves so that disunion may not arise amongst you. There were, in former days, celebrated throughout the three worlds, two brothers named Sunda and Upasunda living together and incapable of being slain by anybody except by each other. They ruled the same kingdom, lived in the same house, slept on the same bed, sat on the same seat and ate of the same plate. And yet they killed each other for the sake of Tilottama. Therefore, O Yudhishtira, preserve your friendship for one another and so conduct yourselves that there may not be any discord amongst you.'

The illustrious Pandavas then established a rule amongst themselves in the presence of the celestial *Rishi* himself. The rule was that, when one of them was in the company of Draupadi, if any of the others should encroach on their privacy, the intruder shall go into exile and live in a forest for twelve years as a *Brahmacharin*."

ARJUNA'S EXILE

Vaisampayana said: "Having established such a rule the Pandavas continued to reside happily at Khandavaprastha. By the prowess of their arms they brought many kings under their sway.

After some time, O king, it happened that certain robbers lifted the cattle of a Brahmana. Repairing to Khandavaprastha he reproached the Pandavas and said: 'Ye Pandavas, from this, your dominion, my kine are even now being taken away by force by despicable and wicked wretches. Pursue ye the thieves. A king that taketh the sixth part of the produce of the land without protecting his subjects hath been called by the wise to be the most sinful person in the whole world. The wealth of a Brahmana is being taken away by robbers. Take me up by the hand, ye Pandavas, for I am plunged in grief.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Dhananjaya assured the Brahmana to have no fear. But the chamber where the Pandavas kept their weapons happened at the moment to be occupied by Yudhishtira and Draupadi. Arjuna reflected with a sorrowful heart: 'Alas, this innocent Brahmana's wealth is being robbed. If I do not protect him, the king will be touched with sin in consequence of my indifference, and such neglect of duty on our part will be a standing reproach to our reputation throughout the kingdom. But, by entering the chamber I incur the penalty of an exile in the woods. I care not if I have to go to the woods and die there. Virtue is superior to the body and lasteth after the body hath perished.' Arriving at this resolution, he entered the chamber and conferred with Yudhishtira. Then, armed with the bow and cased in mail and mounting his war-chariot decked with his standard, he pursued the marauders and, piercing them with his arrows, compelled them to give up the booty. Bowing unto all the elders and congratulated by everybody, Partha, on returning to the capital, approached Yudhishtira and said: 'Give me leave, O lord, to observe the vow I took.

In beholding thee sitting with Draupadi, I have violated the rule established by ourselves. I shall therefore go into the woods, for even this is our understanding.' Then Yudhishthira in grief said to his brother: 'O sinless one, if I am worthy of regard, listen to what I say. Full well do I know the reason why thou hadst to enter my chamber and didst what thou regardedst to be an act disagreeable to me. But I am not displeased at all. The younger brother may, without committing any breach, enter the chamber where the elder brother sitteth with his wife. It is only the elder brother that will be acting against the rules of propriety if he enters the room where the younger brother sitteth with his wife. Therefore, desist from thy purpose.'

Arjuna, hearing this, replied: 'I have heard, even from thee, that quibbling is not permitted in the discharge of duty. I cannot depart from truth. Truth is my weapon.'

Obtaining then the king's permission, Arjuna prepared himself for a life in the woods for twelve years.

That foremost one of Kuru's race saw many regions of sacred waters one after another. Whatever regions of sacred waters and whatever other holy places there were in Vanga and Kalinga, Arjuna visited all of them. Then he went to the shores of the southern ocean and thereafter he visited all the sacred waters and other holy places that were on the shores of the western ocean.

Finally, Bibhatsu reached the sacred spot called Prabhasa. Hearing of it, Madhava went there quickly to see his friend. Riding upon a golden car, both of them then set out for Dwaraka, the capital of the Yadavas. And, O Janamejaya, for honouring the son of Kunti, the city of Dwaraka was decorated grandly, and the citizens desirous of beholding the son of Kunti began to pour eagerly into the public thoroughfares by hundreds of thousands. Arjuna was welcomed with respect by all the sons of the Bhojas, the Vrishnis and the Andhakas and by all the young men of the Yadava tribe. Wending his way then to the

delightful mansion of Krishna he stayed there with Krishna for many days."

THE ABDUCTION OF SUBHADRA

Vaisampayana said: "A few days after this, there was a grand festival of the Vrishnis and the Andhakas on the Raivataka mountain. Krishna and Partha went about together beholding everything around. While wandering there, they saw the pretty daughter of Vasudeva, Bhadra by name, decked with every ornament and surrounded by her maids. Observing Partha's attention fixed on her, Krishna smiled and said: 'How is this? Can the heart of one that rangeth the woods be agitated by the god of love? This is my sister, Partha. Bhadra is her name and she is the favourite daughter of my father. Tell me if thy heart is set on her, for I shall then speak to my father myself.'

Arjuna answered: 'She is Vasudeva's daughter and Vasudeva's sister. Endued with so much beauty, whom can she not fascinate? Tell me how I may obtain her. I will do anything that can be done by man in order to win her.

Vasudeva answered: '*Self-choice* hath been ordained for the marriage of Kshatriyas. But that is risky, Partha, as we do not know this girl's temper and disposition. In the case of Kshatriyas that are brave, a forcible abduction for purposes of marriage is commended by the learned. Therefore, Arjuna, carry away this my beautiful sister by force.'

Then Dhananjaya, having obtained the assent of Yudhishthira and ascertaining, O Janamejaya, that the maiden had gone to the Raivataka hill, settled in consultation with Krishna all that was required to be done. Then, with Krishna's consent, mounting his well-built car of gold and arrayed in mail and armed with sword, Arjuna set out as if he was going on a hunting expedition. Meanwhile, Subhadra, having worshipped the deities and having also walked round the hill, was coming towards Dwaravati. The

son of Kunti suddenly rushed towards that Yadava girl of faultless features and seizing her put her in his car and proceeded towards his own city (Indraprastha).

The proud Vrishni heroes, as soon as they heard of it, jumped from their seats, unable to brook what Arjuna had done. Some amongst them said: 'Yoke our cars'; and some, 'Bring our weapons'; and some said: 'Bring our best bows and strong coats of mail'. Some loudly called upon their charioteers to get their cars ready; and others, from impatience, yoked their horses themselves. And while their cars, armours and standards were being brought, loud became the uproar of those heroes.

Then Rama spoke unto Vasudeva: 'Why, O Janardana, sittest thou gazing without uttering a word? Achyuta, it was for thy sake that the son of Pritha had been welcomed and honoured by us. It seemeth, however, that that vile wretch deserved not our homage. Would anyone born of a respectable family break the plate after having dined off it! Slighting us, and thee too, that Pandava hath to-day kidnapped Subhadra and is courting his own death. He hath placed his foot on the crown of my head. How could I, Govinda, meekly submit to it? Would I not resent it, even like a snake that is trodden upon? Alone I shall to-day wipe the Kauravas off the face of the earth?'

When the heroes of the Vrishni race were speaking excitedly in this strain, Vasudeva uttered these words of deep import and consistent with true morality: 'Gudakesha (the conqueror of sleep or he of the curly hair), by what he hath done, hath not insulted our family. Partha knoweth that we of the Satwata race are never mercenary. The son of Pandu also regardeth self-choice as doubtful in its results. Who would approve of accepting a bride in gift as if she were an animal? I think Arjuna, seeing these defects in all the other methods, took the maiden away by force, according to ordinance. This alliance is very proper. Who is there that would not desire to have Arjuna for a friend—Arjuna, born in the race of Bharata and the renowned

Santanu, and also the son of the daughter of Kuntibhoja? I do not see, in all the worlds including Indra and the Rudras, the person that can by force vanquish Partha in battle, except the three-eyed god Mahadeva. Go ye cheerfully in pursuit of Dhananjaya and by conciliation stop him and bring him back.' Hearing these words of Vasudeva, they did as he directed. Arjuna returned to Dwaraka and was united in marriage with Subhadra. Worshipped by the sons of Vrishni's race, Arjuna, sporting there as he pleased, passed a whole year in Dwaraka.

After the exile of twelve years was over he returned to Khandavaprastha. He approached the king first and then paid his respects to the Brahmanas. At last the hero went unto Draupadi who out of jealousy said unto him: 'Why tarriest thou here, O son of Kunti? Go where the daughter of the Satwata race is. A second tie upon a faggot always relaxeth the first one.' And she lamented much in this strain. But Dhananjaya pacified her fondly and asked her forgiveness. Then he sent Subhadra into the inner apartments dressed (not as a queen but) in the simple garb of a cowherd woman, and she looked even handsomer in that dress. The renowned Bhadra of large and slightly red eyes first worshipped Pritha; and Kunti, with great affection, smelt the head of that girl of perfectly faultless features and pronounced infinite blessings upon her. Then that girl with face like the full-moon went to Draupadi and worshipped her, saying: 'I am thy maid.' Krishna rose quickly and warmly embracing the sister of Madhava said: 'Let thy husband be without a foe.' Bhadra was delighted and said unto Draupadi: 'So be it.' Thereafter, O Janamejaya, those great warriors, the Pandavas, lived happily for sometime and Kunti also was very happy.

Then Subhadra gave birth to an illustrious son called Abhimanyu, like Puloma's daughter (the Queen of heaven) bringing forth Jayanta. Handsome as the full-moon, with a voice deep as the sound of the drum or the clouds, he was like Krishna in courage, energy and looks.

The auspicious Panchali also had, by her five husbands, five sons all of whom were heroes of the foremost rank and immoveable in battle like the hills. Partivindhya by Yudhishtira, Sutasoma by Vrikodara, Srutakarman by Arjuna, Satanika by Nakula, and Srutasena by Sahadeva,—these were the five heroes and great warriors that Panchali brought forth, like Aditi bringing forth the Adityas. And O monarch, all their rites of infancy and childhood such as *Chudakarma* and *Upanayana* (first shave of the head and investiture with the sacred thread) were performed by Dhaumya according to the ordinance. All of them, of excellent conduct and austerity, after having studied the *Vedas*, acquired from Arjuna a knowledge of all weapons, celestial and human. And, O tiger among kings, the Pandavas were all filled with joy, having obtained sons, broad of chest and equal unto the children of the gods, all of whom became great warriors.”

THE BURNING OF THE KHANDAVA FOREST

Vaisampayana said: “After some time, Bibhatsu said to Krishna one day: ‘The summer days have set in; let us go to the banks of the Yamuna. Sporting there in the company of friends we shall return in the evening.’

And Arjuna and Vasudeva went to a certain charming spot in the woods close to the place where the others were sporting; and unto Vasudeva and Dhananjaya, sitting there happily like the twin Aswins in heaven, a certain Brahmana came. His complexion was like unto molten gold. His eyes were like lotus-petals and of a tawny hue. With matted tresses and wearing rags, he came, looking like the morning sun in all its splendour. Beholding that foremost of Brahmanas blazing with radiance approaching them, both Arjuna and Vasudeva quickly rose from their seats to receive him and awaited his commands.

Then that Brahmana addressed Arjuna and Vasudeva: ‘Ye who are now staying so near unto Khandava are the two foremost of heroes on earth. I am a voracious Brahmana

who always eateth much. Thou of the Vrishni race and Partha, I solicit you both to gratify me by giving me sufficient food.' Krishna and the son of Pandu replied: 'Tell us what food will gratify thee, so that we may endeavour to give it to thee.' The illustrious Brahmana said unto those heroes: 'I do not desire to eat ordinary food. Know that I am *Agni* ! Give me the food which suiteth me. This forest of Khandava is ever protected by Indra, and so I always fail to consume it. If you help me I will surely consume this forest; for even this is the food that is desired by me.'

Bibhatsu then said: 'I have no bow suited to the strength of my arms and capable of bearing the might I may put forth in battle. My car also is scarcely able to bear the load of arrows that I would desire to keep by me. I desire celestial steeds of pure white, possessing the speed of the wind. Again, there is no weapon suited to Krishna's energy and with which Madhava can slay *Nagas* and *Pisachas*. It behoveth thee to give us the means by which success may be achieved and by which we may prevent Indra from pouring his showers upon that extensive forest.'

Agni then gave unto Arjuna that wonderful jewel of a bow called *Gandiva*. Varuna also gave him two inexhaustible quivers and a car equipped with celestial weapons and whose banner bore the emblem of a large ape. Yoked unto that car were steeds white as silver or the fleecy clouds. And Pavaka then gave unto Krishna a discus with an iron rod attached to a hole in the centre. 'Hurled by thee in battle at thy foes, this weapon will without doubt slay the enemy and return into thy hands,' said Pavaka.

Surrounding the forest on all sides with his seven flames, *Agni* then began to consume the forest of Khandava.

Krishna and Arjuna riding in their cars and placing themselves on opposite sides of that forest began a great slaughter of the creatures dwelling in Khandava.

And it so happened that the slayer of Madhu suddenly beheld an *Asura* of the name of Maya escaping from the abode of Takshaka. Beholding the *Asura*, Vasudeva stood

with his weapon upraised, ready to smite him down. Seeing the discus uplifted and *Agni* pursuing from behind to burn him, Maya said: 'Run to me, O Arjuna, and protect me !' Hearing this affrighted voice Arjuna said: 'Fear not !' As the merciful son of Pritha had said unto Maya that there was nothing to fear, he of the Dasarha race no longer desired to slay Maya and *Agni* also burned him not.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Protected from Indra by Krishna and Partha, *Agni* burned that forest for five and ten days sparing only six of its dwellers, namely, Aswasena, Maya and four birds called *Sarangakas*.

It was thus that the illustrious god of fierce rays consumed, for the good of the world, the forest of Khandava (which was the abode of the Danavas, Rakshasas and Nagas, wolves, bears and other wild animals). And *Agni* became highly gratified and manifested himself to Arjuna. Then Purandara, surrounded by the Maruts, descended from the firmament and addressing Partha and Kesava said: 'Ye have achieved a feat that even a celestial could not perform. Ask ye each a boon such as no mortal obtaineth. I have been gratified with you.'

Then Partha asked Indra for all his weapons. And Sakra of great splendour, having fixed the time for giving them, said: 'When the illustrious Madhava becomes pleased with thee, then, son of Pandu, I will give thee all my weapons. I shall know when the time cometh. Even for thy austere asceticism I will give thee all my weapons of fire and all my *Vayavya* weapons, and thou also wilt accept them all of me.' Then Vasudeva asked that his friendship with Arjuna might be eternal. The chief of the celestials granted unto the intelligent Krishna the boon he desired."

END OF ADI PARVA

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SABHA PARVA

MAYA BUILDS A PALACE

Vaisampayana said: "Then, in the presence of Vasudeva, Maya Danava, having worshipped Arjuna, spoke unto him with joined hands: 'Saved have I been by thee from this Krishna in anger and from Pavaka (fire) desirous of consuming me. Tell me how I may serve thee in return. I am a great artist, the Viswakarma of the Danavas.'

"Arjuna said: 'Thou regardest thyself as saved by me. Even if it be so, I cannot have thee do anything for me. But I do not wish to disappoint you. Do thou something for Krishna. That will be sufficient requital for my services to thee.'

"Then, urged by Maya, Krishna directed him, saying: 'Let a palatial amphitheatre be built, if thou, who art the foremost of all artists, desirest to serve Yudhishtira the just. Indeed, build thou such a palace as no mortal would be able to imitate even after examining it with care—one in which we may behold a blending of celestial, *Asura* and human designs.'

"Then Maya Danava took leave of Arjuna saying, 'I shall now go with thy leave, but will come back soon. On the north of the Kailasa peak, while the Danavas were performing a sacrifice on the banks of lake Bindu, I collected a treasure consisting of a variety of lovely precious stones. This was stored in the mansion of Vrishaparva, ever devoted to truth. If it be still there, I shall bring it.'

"Bringing all that wealth the *Asura* constructed therewith a peerless palace celebrated throughout the three worlds. He also gave unto Bhimasena that best of clubs (formerly used by the king of the Danavas) and unto Arjuna that excellent conch-shell called Devadatta at whose sound all

creatures trembled in awe. And the palace that Maya built, having of columns of gold, occupied, O monarch, an area of five thousand cubits. Indeed, it was so spacious and built with such rich materials that in beauty it far surpassed the mansion of Brahma himself. Within that palace Maya placed a peerless tank, and in that tank were lotuses with leaves of dark-coloured gems and stalks of bright jewels, and other flowers with golden leaves. And aquatic fowl of various species sported on its bosom. Its bottom was without mud and its water transparent. There was a flight of stairs, made of crystal, leading from the banks to the edge of the water. The banks were paved with slabs of costly marble set with pearls. Beholding that tank thus adorned, many visitors mistook it for land and unwittingly fell into it. Having constructed the palatial amphitheatre in fourteen months Maya reported to Yudhishtira.

“Then King Yudhishtira formally entered that palatial amphitheatre, having first fed ten thousand Brahmanas with preparations of milk and rice mixed with clarified butter and honey, with fruits and roots, and with pork and venison. The king also gave unto each of those Brahmanas a thousand kine. And when, after duly worshipping the gods to the accompaniment of music, the Kuru king entered the palatial amphitheatre, athletes, mimes, prize-fighters and bards gratified that illustrious son of Dharma with exhibitions of their skill. After thus celebrating his entry into the palace, Yudhishtira with his brothers sported therein like Sakra himself in heaven. There sat in the *Sabha*, along with the Pandavas, numerous *Rishis* and kings that had come from various countries to grace the occasion. And they all waited upon Yudhishtira like the celestials in heaven waiting upon Brahma.”

NARADA ON KINGLY DUTIES

Vaisampayana said: “While the illustrious Pandavas were seated in that *Sabha*, there came, O Bharata, unto that

assembly the celestial *Rishi* Narada worshipped by the celestials. He was versed in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, acquainted with histories and Puranas, familiar with all that occurred in ancient *kalpas*, skilled in *Nyaya* and had a thorough knowledge of the six *Angas* (*viz.*, pronunciation, grammar, prosody, etymology, description of religious rites and astronomy). He was a perfect master in reconciling contradictory texts, eloquent, resolute, intelligent and possessed of powerful memory. He was acquainted with the science of morals and politics, learned, and was capable of meeting successfully Brihaspati himself in argument. He could survey the whole universe above, below and around, as if it were present before his eyes. He was master of both the *Sankhya* and *Yoga* systems of philosophy and revelled in humbling the celestials and *Asuras* by fomenting quarrels among them. The *Rishi*, having wandered over the different worlds, came into that *Sabha* and was delighted to see the Pandavas. Yudhishtira quickly rose with his younger brothers and, bowing low with humility, cheerfully saluted the *Rishi* and gave with due ceremonies a befitting seat unto him. The king also gave him kine and the usual offerings of the *Arghya* including honey and other ingredients. Narada was gratified at the reception and spoke unto Yudhishtira the following words bearing upon Dharma, Artha and Kama.

“Narada said: ‘Is the wealth thou art earning being spent on proper objects? Doth thy mind take delight in Dharma? Art thou enjoying the pleasures of life and is thy mind immersed in them? Dost thou attend to religion, wealth and pleasure dividing thy time judiciously?’

With the six attributes of kings (*viz.*, cleverness of speech, readiness in providing means, intelligence in dealing with the foe, memory and acquaintance with morals and politics), dost thou attend to the seven means (*viz.*, sowing dissensions, chastisement, conciliation, gifts, incantations, medicine and magic)? Examinest thou also, after a

survey of thy own strength and weakness, the fourteen possessions of thy foes? (These are the country, forts, chariots, elephants, cavalry, foot-soldiers, the principal officials of state, the zenana, food supply, computation of the army and income, the religious treatises in force, the accounts of state, the revenue, wine-shops and other secret agencies.) O bull of the Bharata race, thy seven principal officers of state (*viz.*, the governor of the citadel, the commander of forces, the chief judge, the general in interior command, the chief priest, the chief physician and the chief astrologer), have not, I hope, succumbed to the influence of thy foes, nor become indolent as a result of the wealth they have accumulated; and that they are all obedient to thee. Thy counsels, I hope, are never divulged by thy trusted spies, by thyself or by thy ministers. Thou ascertainest, I hope, what thy friends, foes and strangers are about? Makest thou peace and makest thou war at proper times? Observest thou neutrality towards strangers and persons that are neutral towards thee?

And, O hero, hast thou made persons like thyself, persons that are old, of unblemished conduct, shrewd, pure as regards birth and blood, and devoted to thee, thy ministers? O Bharata, the success of kings depends largely on good counsels.

Thou hast not become the slave of sleep? Wakest thou at the proper time? Thinkest thou, in the small hours of the night, on what thou shouldst do and what thou shouldst not do the next day?

I hope that thou settlest nothing alone, nor takest counsel with many, and that the course thou hast resolved upon does not become known all over thy kingdom.

Dost thou undertake measures of great utility that are easy of accomplishment? Such measures are never obstructed. Keepest thou the welfare of the agriculturists always in mind? Achievest thou thy measures through persons that are trusted, incorruptible and have practical experience? And, O brave king, I hope people only know

the measures already accomplished by thee and those that have been partially accomplished and are waiting to be completed, but not those that are yet under consideration ?

Are thy forts always stocked with treasure, food, weapons, water, machines, artisans and bowmen ?

Even a single minister that is intelligent, brave, self-controlled and has wisdom and judgment is capable of conferring the highest prosperity on a king or a king's son. I ask thee, therefore, if there is at least one such minister with thee ?

Seekest thou to know everything about the eighteen *Tirthas* of the foe and fifteen of thy own by means of three and three spies all unacquainted with one another ? O slayer of all foes, watchest thou all thy enemies carefully and unknown to them ?

Is the priest thou honourest possessed of humility, purity of blood and renown, and free from jealousy and avarice ? Is the astrologer thou hast employed skilled in reading physiognomy, capable of interpreting omens and competent to counteract the disturbances of nature ?

Have respectable servants been employed by thee in offices that are responsible, indifferent ones in indifferent offices, and the vulgar in offices that are lowly ? Are thy subjects oppressed by cruel and severe punishment ? And, O bull of the Bharata race, do thy ministers rule thy kingdom in accordance with thy orders or do they slight thee, like wives slighting husbands that are proud and incontinent in their behaviour ? Has the commander of thy forces sufficient confidence in himself, and is he brave, intelligent, patient, well-conducted, of good birth, devoted to thee, and competent ? Treatest thou with consideration and regard the chief officers of thy army that are versed in every kind of warfare, are spirited, well-behaved and endued with prowess ? Givest thou to thy troops their sanctioned rations and pay at the appointed time ? Knowest thou that the misery caused by arrears of pay and irregularity in the distribution of rations leadeth to disaster, and that it is held by the learned to be one of the greatest of

mischiefs ? Are all the nobility devoted to thee and ready to lay down their lives in battle cheerfully for thy sake ? I hope no one individual of passions uncontrolled is ever permitted by thee to have unregulated sway over many offices appertaining to the army ? Is any servant of thine, who hath displayed special ability, disappointed in obtaining proper recognition from thee and an increase of food and pay ? I hope thou rewardest men of learning and humility with gifts of wealth and honour according to their merits. Dost thou support the wives and children of men that have fallen for thee and are in distress on thy account ?

O lord of Earth, art thou fair unto all men, and can every one approach thee without fear as if thou wert their mother and father ?

And marchest thou quickly against thy foe when thou hearest that he is in trouble, after taking into consideration all the omens you might see and taking the measures on which success depends and after payment of their pay to the troops in advance ? And, givest thou valuable gifts unto the principal officers of thy enemy, without thy enemy's knowledge ? O son of Pritha, seekest thou to conquer thy incensed foes that are slaves to their passions, having first conquered thy own soul and obtained mastery over thy own senses ? Before thou marchest out against thy foes, dost thou plan properly the employment of reconciliation, gift (of wealth), sowing dissension, and of force ? O monarch, goest thou out against thy enemies, having first strengthened thy own kingdom ? And having gone out against them, exertest thou to the utmost to obtain victory over them ? And having conquered them, seekest thou to protect them with care ?

Is thy army consisting of four kinds of forces, *viz.*, the regular troops, the allies, the mercenaries, and the irregulars, furnished with the eight ingredients, *viz.*, cars, elephants, horses, officers, infantry, camp followers, spies possessing a thorough knowledge of the country, and ensigns ? O great king, I hope thou slayest thy foes regardless of the seasons.

O monarch, I hope trusted servants have been employed by thee to look after thy food, thy robes and perfumes. I hope, thy treasury, barns, stables, arsenals, and women's apartments are all protected by servants devoted to thee and ever seeking thy welfare.

Is thy expenditure always within a fourth, a third or a half of thy income? Dost thou always help with food and money, kinsmen, teachers, merchants, the aged, and other dependants in distress? Do the accountants and clerks employed by thee in looking after thy income and expenditure apprise thee every day in the forenoon of thy income and expenditure? Dismisses thou, without cause, servants, efficient in their work, popular and devoted to thee?

Are the agriculturists in thy kingdom contented? Are large tanks and lakes provided all over thy kingdom at proper intervals, so that agriculture may not be solely dependent on seasonal rains? Do the agriculturists in thy kingdom need seed or food? Dost thou accommodate them with loans of seed-grains, effecting recovery by taking only a fourth out of every measure of the produce over hundred? O child, are the four professions of agriculture, trade, cattle-rearing, and banking in the hands of honest men? Upon these, O monarch, depends the happiness of thy people.

O king, do the five brave and wise men employed in the five offices of protecting the city, the citadel, the merchants, the agriculturists, and punishing the criminals work in co-operation with one another? For the protection of thy city, have the villages been made like towns, and the hamlets and outskirts of villages like villages? Are thieves and robbers that sack thy towns pursued by thy police over the even and uneven parts of thy kingdom?

Consolest thou women and are they protected in thy realm? I hope thou placest not any confidence in them, nor divulgest any secret before any of them?

O son of Pandu, rising from bed at the proper time and dressing thyself well, showest thou thyself to thy people,

accompanied by ministers, and behavest thou like the god of justice himself unto those that deserve punishment and those that deserve worship, unto those that are dear to thee and those that thou likest not? Doth it ever happen, O monarch, that thou failest to decide properly between the plaintiff and the defendant who have come to thee? Deprivest thou, from covetousness or folly, of their means of living those who have sought thy shelter from trustfulness or love?

Dost thou worship Brahmanas and wise men according to their merits? I tell thee, such worship is, without doubt, highly beneficial to thee. Hast thou faith in the religion based on the three *Vedas* and practised by men who have gone before thee? Dost thou carefully follow the practices that were followed by them? Bowest thou unto thy kinsmen and elders, the aged, the gods, ascetics, Brahmanas, and the tall trees (banians) in villages that are of so much benefit to people?

Dost thou ever cause grief to or provoke anger in any one? O monarch, I hope, no well-behaved, pure-souled, and respectable person is ever ruined and his life taken, on a false charge of theft, by thy ministers, ignorant of *Sastras*, acting from greed? I hope that, tempted by bribes, thy ministers never wrongly decide the disputes that arise between the rich and the poor. Dost thou keep thyself free from the fourteen vices of kings, namely, atheism, untruthfulness, anger, incautiousness, procrastination, not visiting the wise, idleness, restlessness of mind, taking counsel with only one man, consultation with persons unacquainted with the science of profit, abandonment of a settled plan, divulgence of counsels, non-accomplishment of beneficial projects, and undertaking everything without reflection? By these, O king, even monarchs firmly seated on their thrones are ruined. Hath thy study of the *Vedas* and have thy wealth, knowledge of the *Sastras*, and marriage borne fruit?

Vaisampayana continued: "After the *Rishi* had finished, Yudhishtira asked: 'How, O *Rishi*, do the *Vedas*, wealth, wife, and knowledge of the *Sastras* bear fruit?'

“The *Rishi* answered: ‘The *Vedas* are said to bear fruit when he that hath studied them performeth the *Agnihotra* and other sacrifices. Wealth is said to bear fruit when he that hath it enjoyeth it himself and giveth it away in charity. A wife is said to bear fruit when she giveth conjugal happiness and beareth sons. Knowledge of the *Sastras* is said to bear fruit when it resulteth in humility and good conduct.’

Vaisampayana continued: “The great ascetic Narada, having answered Yudhishtira thus, again asked that just ruler, ‘Do the officers of thy government, O king, take only their just dues from the merchants that come to thy territories from distant lands? Are the merchants treated with consideration in thy capital and kingdom. Listenest thou always, O monarch, to the advice of men of experience versed in economics? Cherishest thou like a father, the blind, the dumb, the lame, the deformed, the friendless and ascetics that have no homes. Hast thou banished these six evils, O monarch, namely, sleep, idleness, fear, anger, weakness of mind, and procrastination?’

“Having heard these words of that best of Brahmanas, Yudhishtira bowed unto him and worshipping his feet said, ‘I shall do all that thou hast directed, for I have been greatly enlightened by thy advice’.”

PANDU'S MESSAGE

He then asked him: ‘Possessed of the speed of mind, thou roamest over many worlds beholding everything. Didst thou meet my father, the exalted Pandu, now a guest in the abode of the Pitris? O exalted one of great austerity, hath he sent me any message?’

“Narada said: ‘O king of the Kuru race, thy father Pandu, beholding the good fortune of Harischandra (who is the only king admitted to the *Sabha* of Indra) and wondering much thereat, said: ‘Thou shouldst tell Yudhishtira, O *Rishi*, that he can subjugate the whole Earth inasmuch as

his brothers are all obedient to him. And having done so, let him undertake the grand sacrifice called Rajasuya. He is my son. If he performeth that sacrifice, I may like Harischandra soon attain to the abode of Indra and there, in his *Sabha*, pass countless years in uninterrupted happiness.' If thou performest that sacrifice, thou shall be able to enter, along with thy deceased ancestors, the abode of the chief of the immortals. It hath been said, O king, that this great sacrifice is attended with many obstacles. On the commencement of such a sacrifice a war may take place destroying the Kshatriyas and even furnishing occasion for the destruction of the whole Earth. Reflecting upon all this, O king of kings, do what is best for you. May thou prosper and be happy.'

"Having pondered deeply over what Narada had said, Yudhishtira felt inclined to undertake the Rajasuya sacrifice. But, ever mindful of the interests of his subjects, he wanted to be sure that it would be for their good.

"Summoning, therefore, his counsellors and brothers, he consulted them about the sacrifice. Those ministers told him in one voice: 'O prince of the Kuru race, thy friends think that, worthy as thou art of the attributes of an emperor, the time is even come for thee to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice. Thou art quite able to perform this sacrifice. All of us are obedient to thee. Therefore, O great king, resolve to perform this sacrifice without further thought.'

"The king, possessed of great wisdom, however, revolved the matter in his mind in the light of his own strength, resources and the circumstances of time and place. For, he knew that the wise never come to grief as they always act after giving full thought. He considered that Krishna was the best person to advise on the matter, and accordingly sent a messenger unto the Lord of creation. Hearing that the son of Pritha was desirous of seeing him, Krishna arrived at Indraprastha without loss of time.

"And Yudhishtira said to Krishna: 'I wish to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice, and my friends and counsellors say that

I should perform it. But, O Krishna, in this matter, thou must be my guide. Of counsellors, some from friendship overlook difficulties; others, from motives of self-interest, speak only what is agreeable. But thou, O Krishna, art above such motives. Thou hast conquered both desire and anger. I beseech thee to tell me what is most beneficial for the world.'

'Krishna answered: 'O great king, in view of all thy good qualities, thou art worthy to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice. I must, however, tell thee something. Those that now go by the name of Kshatriyas are not of the same quality as the Kshatriyas that Rama, the son of Jamadagni, exterminated. The numerous royal lines and other ordinary Kshatriyas all represent themselves to be the descendants of Aila and Ikshwaku. At present, however, O monarch, King Jarasandha hath set himself over the heads of all the kings. While it behoveth thee, O Bharata, to establish thy empire over all the Kshatriyas, thou wilt not be able to celebrate the Rajasuya as long as the mighty Jarasandha liveth. By him have been immured, in his hill fort, numerous monarchs, like a lion that hath deposited the slain bodies of mighty elephants within a cave of the king of mountains. From fear of Jarasandha, we also, O king, had at one time to leave Mathura and fly to the city of Dwara-vati. If thou desirest to perform this sacrifice, strive to release the kings confined by Jarasandha, as also to compass his death. O son of the Kuru race, otherwise this undertaking of thine can never be completed.'

'Yudhishtira said: 'Thou hast said what none else is capable of saying. I regard peace of mind as the highest objective here, for from that quality proceeds all prosperity. O thou invincible in battle, the might of thy arm is my refuge. When, therefore, thou takest fright at Jarasandha's might, how can I regard myself as strong enough to overcome him? I am very much depressed by the thought whether Jarasandha is capable of being slain by thee, by Rama, by Bhimasena, or by Arjuna.'

“Hearing these words, Bhima observed: ‘It is the general experience that even a weak king may vanquish a strong enemy and obtain the fruition of all his wishes by vigilance and policy. In Krishna is policy, in myself strength, and in Arjuna victory. So like the three (sacrificial) fires that accomplish a sacrifice, we shall accomplish the death of the king of Magadha.’

“Krishna then said: ‘Know that Jarasandha is himself a candidate for the imperial dignity. He hath brought under his sway nearly a hundred kings. Kept in the temple of Shiva as sacrifice unto him like so many animals, and devoted unto that god, do not these monarchs feel the most poignant misery? A Kshatriya that dieth in battle is ever regarded with respect. Why should we not, therefore, get together and oppose Jarasandha in battle? He hath already captured eighty-six kings; fourteen only are wanting to complete a hundred. As soon as he obtaineth those fourteen, he will execute his cruel purpose. He that can obstruct him in doing so will surely win blazing renown. And he that will vanquish Jarasandha will surely become the emperor of all the Kshatriyas.’

“Yudhishtira said: ‘How, Krishna, can I despatch ye unto Jarasandha on the dangerous errand from the purely selfish motive of winning imperial dignity, relying merely on individual courage? Both Bhima and Arjuna, I regard as my eyes, and thee, Janardana, as my mind. How shall I live, deprived of my eyes and mind? Yama himself cannot vanquish in battle the mighty host of Jarasandha. This affair seems fraught with great mischief. I think, therefore, that the task should not be undertaken.’

Vaisampayana said: “Arjuna addressing Yudhishtira said: ‘I have obtained, O king, a bow, weapons and arrows, and have energy and allies. Born in a race noted for valour, one that is without valour is scarcely worthy of regard. And he that is possessed of valour, though destitute

of all other merits, will vanquish his foes. Every merit exists by the side of valour in an incipient state. If, for the purpose of our sacrifice, we endeavour to slay Jarasandha and incidentally rescue the kings confined by him for a cruel purpose, there is no higher act in which we could employ ourselves. If, however, we undertake not the task, the world will always regard us as incompetent. We have certainly the competence, O king !

“Vasudeva said: ‘Arjuna hath correctly indicated what the attitude should be of one that is born in the Bharata race, especially of one who is the son of Kunti. We know not when death will overtake us, in the night or in the day. Nor have we ever heard that immortality hath been achieved by desisting from fighting. Why should we not then, aided by good policy, quietly get in touch with the foe and destroy him, like the current of a river uprooting a tree? If, covering up our own weakness, we attack the enemy taking advantage of his weakness, why should we not succeed? Indeed, the policy of the wise is never to fight with foes that are exceedingly powerful and stand at the head of well-arrayed forces. I agree with that view. If, however, we accomplish our purpose by secretly entering the abode of our foe and overpowering him, we shall never earn obloquy. For saving our relatives we will either slay him in battle or we shall ascend to heaven being slain by him’.”

THE STORY OF JARASANDHA

“Yudhishtira said: ‘O Krishna, who is this Jarasandha? What could be that energy and what the prowess, that, having touched thee, he hath not been scorched like an insect touching fire?’

“Krishna said: ‘Hear, O monarch, who Jarasandha is, what his energy, and what his prowess, and why also he hath been spared by us, even though he hath repeatedly offended us. There was a mighty king of the name of Brihadratha, the lord of the Magadhas. That monarch

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married the beautiful twin daughters of the king of Kasi, and he promised to love them equally. One day, the king heard that the high-souled Chanda-kausika, of the illustrious Gautama race, had arrived in the course of his wanderings and was sitting under the shade of a tree. The king went unto that *Muni* accompanied by his two wives and, worshipping him with offering of jewels and valuable presents, gratified him highly. That best of *Rishis* then told the king, 'O king of kings, I am pleased with thee. Solicit thou a boon'. King Brihadratha, with his wives, bowed low unto that *Rishi* and choked with tears spoke these words: 'O holy one, forsaking my kingdom I am about to retire into the woods to lead a life of austerity. I am very unfortunate, for I have no son. What shall I do, therefore, with my kingdom or with a boon?'

"Hearing these words, the *Muni* entered into meditation under the mango tree. And there fell upon the lap of the *Muni* a mango that was juicy and untouched by a parrot or any other bird. Taking up the fruit and mentally pronouncing certain *mantras* over it, he gave it unto the king as the means of his obtaining an incomparable offspring. Recollecting his promise unto them, the king gave the fruit to his wives to share. Dividing the fruit into two parts they ate it. Both of them conceived, and in due course each of the queens gave birth to a fragmentary body. And each fragment had one eye, one arm, one leg, half a stomach, half a face, etc. Beholding the fragmentary bodies, the mothers trembled much, and the helpless sisters, after anxious consultation, sorrowfully abandoned those fragments. The two midwives that waited upon the queens then, carefully wrapping up the still-born fragments, went out of the inner apartments of the palace by the back door and threw away the bodies. A little later, a *Rakshasa* woman, by the name of Jara, chanced to pass that way. She took up the fragments and joined them to carry them away easily. But, to her astonishment, as soon as the fragments were united, they formed a sturdy child of one body endued with life,

and the female cannibal found herself unable to take away that child which had a body hard and strong as a thunder-bolt. The infant began to roar terribly like rain-charged clouds. Alarmed at the sound, the inmates of the palace came out with the king. The helpless and disappointed queens, with breasts full of milk; also came out immediately to recover their child. Beholding them the cannibal thought within herself, 'I live within the dominions of the king who is so desirous of offspring. It behoveth me not, therefore, to kill the infant child of such an illustrious and virtuous monarch'. Holding the child in her arms like the clouds enveloping the sun, and assuming a human form she said to the king: 'Brihadratha, this is thy child. It hath been born of both thy wives by virtue of the command of the great Brahmana. Cast away by the midwives, it hath been protected by me.'

"The king was filled with joy and asked: 'O thou of the complexion of the filaments of the lotus, who art thou that givest me this child? Auspicious one, thou seemest to me to be a goddess roaming at thy will.'

"The *Rakshasa* woman answered: 'Blessed be thou, O king of kings! Capable of assuming any form at will, I am a *Rakshasa* woman called Jara. I am living happily in thy house worshipped by all. Every day I wander from house to house. Indeed, I was created of old by the Self-create and named *Grihadēvi* (the household goddess). Of celestial beauty, I was ushered into the world for the destruction of the Danavas. He that with devotion painteth on the walls of his house a likeness of myself endued with youth, and in the midst of children, will have prosperity in his abode. Painted on the walls of thy house is a likeness of myself surrounded by numerous children, and I am daily worshipped with scents and flowers, with incense and edibles and other offerings. Having thus received worship in thy house, I have daily been thinking of doing thee some good in return. I happened, virtuous king, to see the fragmentary bodies of thy son. When they were united by me they became a living child.'

“Having spoken these words, Jara disappeared there and then. And the king then caused all the rites of infancy to be performed on that child, and ordered a festival to be observed by his people in honour of that *Rakshasa* woman. Because the child had been united by Jara, he said he should be called *Jarasandha* (united by *Jara*). And the son of the king of Magadha, endued with great energy, began to grow up in bulk and strength like a fire into which hath been poured libations of clarified butter.’

“After some time king Brihadratha got tired of worldly pleasures. And, installing Jarsanadha as king, he retired into the woods followed by his two wives. Jarasandha by his valour brought numerous kings under his sway. Having received numerous boons from the gods he ruled his kingdom like a father. Some time after, when king Kansa was slain by Vasudeva, enmity arose between him and Krishna.’

“Krishna continued: ‘Both Hansa and Dimvaka (his two powerful friends) have fallen; Kansa also with all his followers has been slain. The time hath, therefore, come for the destruction of Jarasandha. He is incapable of being vanquished in battle even by all the celestials and the *Asuras*. We think, however, that he could be vanquished in a personal combat with bare arms. In me is policy; in Bhima strength, and there is Arjuna to protect us both. If thou hast any faith in me, then make over to me, as a pledge, Bhima and Arjuna without loss of time.’

Vaisampayana continued: “Thus addressed by the exalted one, Yudhishtira replied: ‘Thou art the lord of the Pandavas. We are dependent on thee. What thou sayest, Govinda, is consistent with wise counsels. I regard Jarasandha as already slain, that the monarchs confined by him have already been set free and that the Rajasuya hath already been accomplished by me.’

“Krishna, Arjuna and Bhima then set out for Magadha attired in the garb of *Snataka* Brahmanas. They passed through Kuru-jangala, and crossing the Ganges and the Sone they went on towards the east. At last, those heroes

arrived in Magadha and approached the impregnable city of Girivraja. And it so happened that the learned Brahmanas residing within the city noticed many evil omens which they reported to Jarasandha. With a view to ward off evil, King Jarasandha entered upon the celebration of a sacrifice, with proper vows and fasts. Meanwhile, O Bharata, the brothers unarmed, or rather with their bare arms as their only weapons, entered the capital in the guise of *Snataka* Brahmanas. They snatched from the flower-vendors the garlands they had exposed for sale; and attired in robes of various colours and decked in garlands and ear-rings the heroes entered the abode of Jarasandha like Himalayan lions eyeing cattle-folds. The people of Magadha, beholding those heroes who looked like elephants, with stout necks like the trunk of *sala* trees and wide chests, began to wonder much. Passing through three gates crowded with men they proudly approached the king. And Jarasandha quickly received them respectfully, offering them water to wash their feet, and honey and other ingredients of the *Arghya* together with gifts of kine. The great king addressing them said, 'Ye are welcome'. Partha and Bhima remained silent. But Krishna said: 'O king of kings, these two companions of mine are observing a vow. They will not speak till midnight. After that hour they will speak with thee.' Having accommodated his guests in the sacrificial apartments, the king retired into his private chambers and came to see them again at midnight.

Though much surprised at the strange attire of his guests, that best of kings waited on them respectfully. Beholding King Jarasandha they said, 'May thou have salvation, O king, without difficulty.' Having said this unto the monarch, they stood looking at each other. And Jarasandha spoke unto them: 'Brahmanas observing the *Snataka* vow never deck their persons with garlands and fragrant paste unseasonably. Who are ye, therefore, thus decked with flowers and with hands bearing the marks of

the bow-string? Ye give me to understand that ye are Brahmanas, although ye bear Kshatriya energy. Tell us truly who ye are. Why have ye, in disguise, entered the city by an improper gate without fear of the royal wrath? The energy of a Brahmana dwelleth in speech and not in action. This your feat is not in accord with the order to which ye profess to belong. Tell us, therefore, the end ye have in view. Why accept ye not the worship I offer? What is your object in coming to me?' The high-souled Krishna, well-skilled in speech, thus replied unto the monarch in a subdued and grave voice:

'O king, know us for *Snataka* Brahmanas. Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas are all competent to observe the vow of *Snataka*. This vow, besides, hath many rules—general as well as special. According to the ordinance, an enemy's abode should be entered through a wrong gate and a friend's abode through the proper gate. And know, O monarch, that it is also our vow that, having entered the foe's abode for the accomplishment of our purpose, we accept not the worship offered to us.'

'Jarasandha said: 'I do not recollect ever having done ye any harm. Why then do ye regard me, who am innocent, as your foe? O, answer me truly; for this, indeed, is the rule followed by the honest.'

'Krishna said: 'O thou of mighty arms, there is a certain person at the head of a royal line who upholdeth the dignity of his race. At his command have we come against thee. Thou hast kept many Kshatriyas as thy captives. Having perpetrated that wrong how dost thou regard thyself as innocent? Treating other kings with cruelty, thou seekest to offer them as sacrifice unto the god Rudra. The slaughter of human beings as sacrifice unto the gods is unknown. With the object of helping all distressed people and for the prosperity of our race we have come hither to slay thee, the slaughterer of our relatives. Thou thinkest that there is no one among the Kshatriyas equal to thee. Do not disregard others, O king! Valour dwelleth in every man. There are

many men whose valour may be equal or superior to thine. Thy prowess, O king, can be met by us. Know that we are certainly not Brahmanas. I am Hrisikesha, otherwise called Sauri, and these two heroes are the sons of Pandu. O king of Magadha, we challenge thee. Either set free all the monarchs or go thou to the abode of Yama.'

'Jarasandha said: 'I never make captive of a king without first vanquishing him. This, Krishna, it hath been said, is the duty that should be followed by Kshatriyas. Having gathered these monarchs with a view to offering them as sacrifice unto the god, how shall I, from fear, liberate them to-day. With troops against troops arrayed in order of battle, or alone against one, or against two, or against three, together or separately, I am ready to do battle.'

Vaisampayana said: 'Having spoken thus and desiring to fight with those heroes of mighty deeds, Jarasandha ordered his son Sahadeva to be installed on the throne.'

'Then, addressing King Jarasandha resolved upon fighting Krishna asked: 'O king, with whom amongst us three dost thou desire to fight?' And Jarasandha expressed his desire to fight with Bhima.

The priest then, bringing with him the yellow pigment obtained from the cow and garlands of flowers and other auspicious articles, as also several potent drugs for restoring lost consciousness and alleviating pain, approached Jarasandha, panting for battle. Taking off his crown and binding his hair properly, Jarasandha stood forth like an ocean bursting its bounds and said to Bhima, 'I will fight with thee. It is far better to be vanquished by a foeman of note.' And saying this, Jarasandha rushed at Bhimasena like the *Asura* Vala of old charging at the chief of the celestials. The mighty Bhimasena also advanced towards Jarasandha. Then those tigers among men, those heroes of great prowess, with their bare arms as their only weapons, commenced to fight, each desirous of vanquishing the other. They would seize each other's arm, and twine each other's legs; at times, they slapped their armpits

causing the enclosure to tremble at the sound. And frequently seizing each other's necks with their hands and dragging and pushing with violence, and each pressing every limb of his body against every limb of the other, they fought on. Sometimes stretching their arms, sometimes drawing them close, at times raising them up and dropping them down, they began to seize each other. Striking neck against neck and forehead against forehead, they caused fiery sparks to fly like flashes of lightning. And grasping each other in various ways and kicking each other with such violence as to shake the innermost nerves, they struck at each other's breasts with clenched fists. Incensed at the blows they fought on dragging and pushing each other and fiercely looking at each other like two lions full of wrath. And catching by the waist, they hurled each other to a distance. The heroes then performed that grandest of all feats in wrestling called *Prishtha-bhanga* which consisted in throwing a person down with face to the ground and keeping him in that position as long as possible. They also performed the feats called *Sampurna-murchha* and *Purna-kumbha*. At times they twisted each other's arms and other limbs as if these were vegetable fibres to be twisted into chords. The citizens consisting of thousands of Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras, and even women and the aged collected there to witness the fight. That encounter of the heroes commenced on the first lunar day of the month of Kartic and the illustrious heroes fought on without intermission and without food, day and night, till the thirteenth lunar day. It was on the night of the fourteenth of the lunar fortnight that the monarch of Magadha at last began to relax from fatigue. Mustering all his strength and courage and lifting up the powerful Jarasandha, Bhima began to whirl him on high; and after whirling him full hundred times, Bhima pressed his knee against Jarasandha's backbone and rending his body in twain uttered a terrible roar. The citizens of Magadha were struck dumb with terror, and many women

were prematurely delivered. Leaving the lifeless body of the king at the palace gate where he lay as one asleep, Krishna, accompanied by Bhima and Arjuna, went out in Jarasandha's car and released his imprisoned relatives and other kings. Then, coming out of Girivraja, they stopped for some time on a level plain outside the town. And, O king, all the citizens with the Brahmanas at their head, hastened thither to adore Krishna with proper ceremonies. The monarchs who had been released from confinement also worshipped the slayer of Madhu with reverence and said: 'O Vishnu, languishing as we all were in the terrible hill-fort of Jarasandha, it is by sheer good fortune that we have been rescued by thee. We bow to thee and await thy commands.' The high-souled Hrishikesa gave them every assurance and said: 'Yudhishtira is desirous of performing the sacrifice of Rajasuya. Solicitous as that monarch, ever guided by virtue, is of acquiring the imperial dignity, assist ye in his endeavours.'

"Then the son of Jarasandha, accompanied by his relatives and the principal officers of state and with his priest before them came thither. Bowing low and making large presents of jewels and precious stones he worshipped Vasudeva who gladly installed the prince then and there in the sovereignty of Magadha. Accompanied by the two sons of Pandu, Achyuta returned to Indraprastha and in great joy said to Yudhishtira: 'O best of kings, from good fortune, the mighty Jarasandha hath been slain by Bhima, and the monarchs confined at Girivraja have all been set free. From good fortune also, Bhima and Dhananjaya have returned safe.' And Yudhishtira worshipped Krishna and embraced Bhima and Arjuna in joy."

THE RAJASUYA SACRIFICE

Vaisampayana continued: "Arjuna said to Yudhishtira: 'Bow, weapons, allies, territory, fame, army—all these have been obtained by me. I think, that what needs

now to be done is to fill our treasury. I desire to make kings all over the world to pay tribute to us. I, therefore, wish to set out, in an auspicious moment of a holy day of the moon under a favourable constellation, for the conquest of the direction that is presided over by the lord of treasures (*viz.*, the North).’

“King Yudhishtira replied, ‘O bull of the Bharata race, set thou out, after holy Brahmanas have uttered benedictions on thee, and plunge thy enemies in sorrow and fill thy friends with joy. Victory will surely be thine.’

“Surrounded by a large host, Arjuna then set out in the celestial car he had obtained from Agni and brought under subjection every prince in the North. Bhimasena conquered the East, Sahadeva the South and Nakula the West.

Vaisampayana said: “The large treasure-room of the king became so full with the wealth thus obtained that it could not be emptied even in a hundred years. Then, his friends and officers approaching Yudhishtira said: ‘The time hath come, O exalted one, for thy sacrifice. Let arrangements, therefore, be made without delay.’ While they were thus talking, Hari (Krishna) arrived there accompanied by a mighty host. And that omniscient and ancient one, that soul of the *Vedas*, that origin of all things, as also that in which all things will be dissolved, that lord of the past, the future and the present, brought with him a large treasure for Yudhishtira. Yudhishtira enquired of his welfare and then spoke thus:

“‘O Krishna, it is due to thee that the whole earth is under my sway, and it is through thy grace that vast wealth hath been acquired by me. It now behoveth thee to grant me permission to celebrate the sacrifice along with thee and my younger brothers. Therefore, Govinda, instal thyself at the sacrifice; or grant permission to my installation at the sacrifice along with these my younger brothers.’

“Krishna replied: ‘Thou, O tiger among kings, deservest imperial dignity. Let, therefore, the great sacrifice be per-

formed by thee. Employ me also in some office in that connection, and I shall obey all thy commands.'

"Along with his brothers Yudhishtira then set about making preparations for the Rajasuya sacrifice. The son of Satyavati became himself the *Brahma* of that sacrifice; Susaman, the reciter of the Vedic (*Sama*) hymns; Yajñavalkya the *Adhvaryu*; Paila and Dhaumya became the *Hotris*. And the disciples and the sons of these men, all learned in the *Vedas* and the branches of the *Vedas*, became *Hotragas*. Uttering benedictions and reciting the object of the sacrifice, they all worshipped, according to the ordinance, the large sacrificial grounds. Builders and artificers then erected numerous edifices there that were spacious and filled with perfume like the temples of the gods. When these were ready, Yudhishtira commanded his chief adviser Sahadeva saying, 'Despatch thou, without loss of time, messengers, endued with speed, to invite all (to the sacrifice).' And Sahadeva despatched messengers telling them, 'Invite ye all the Brahmanas in the kingdom, all the owners of land (Kshatriyas), all the Vaisyas and also all the respectable Sudras, and bring them hither'.

"Then, the Brahmanas, at the proper time, installed Yudhishtira at the Rajasuya sacrifice; and after the ceremony of installation was over, Yudhishtira the just, like the god Dharma incarnate, entered the sacrificial compound, surrounded by thousands of Brahmanas, his brothers, relatives, friends, counsellors, officers of the State, and a large number of Kshatriya kings who had come from various countries.

"Thus commenced on earth the sacrifice of the illustrious son of Pandu, like the sacrifice in heaven of Sakra himself. Then King Yudhishtira despatched Nakula unto Hastinapura to invite Bhishma, Drona, Dhritarashtra, Vidura and Kripa and such of his cousins as were well-disposed towards him.'

"And Dhritarashtra, Bhishma and Vidura of high intelligence; all the Kaurava brothers with Duryodhana at their

head; Suvala, the king of Gandhara; Sakuni endued with great strength; Achala, Vrishaka, and Karna, that foremost of all charioteers; Salya endued with great might and the strong Valhika; Somadatta, Bhuri of the Kuru race, Bhurisravas, and Sala; Aswatthaman, Kripa, Drona, and Jayadratha, the ruler of Sindhu; Yajnasena with his sons; that great charioteer king Bhagadatta accompanied by all the *Mlechcha* tribes inhabiting the marshy regions on the sea-shore; many mountain chiefs, and king Vrihadvala; Vasudeva, the king of the Paundryas, and the kings of Vanga and Kalinga; Akarsha, Kuntala and the kings of the Malavas and the Andhrakas; the Dravidas and the Singhalas; the king of Kasmira, king Kuntibhoja of great energy, and king Gauravahana; and all the other heroic kings of Valhika; Virata with his two sons, and Mavella endued with great might; king Sisupala, invincible in battle, accompanied by his son; and other kings and princes from several countries came to grace the sacrifice of the son of Pandu. And Rama, Aniruddha, Kanaka and Sarana; Gada, Pradyumna, Shamva, and Charudeshna of great energy; Ulmuka, Nishatha and the brave Angavaha; and innumerable other Vrishnis—mighty charioteers all—were there. And that sacrificial mansion with the numerous kings, Brahmanas and great *Rishis* assembled there, looked magnificent as heaven itself filled with the gods.'

"And after worshipping his grandfather Bhishma and his preceptor, Drona, Yudhishtira addressed them and Kripa, the son of Drona, Duryodhana and Vivingsati, 'Lend ye all your support in conducting this sacrifice. This large treasure that is here is yours. Consult ye with one another and guide me'.

"He then assigned suitable tasks to everyone of them. Dussasana was to superintend the department of food; Aswatthaman to attend on the Brahmanas; Sanjaya to honour and welcome the kings; Kripa to look after the valuables, as also the distribution of gifts to Brahmanas; Bhishma and Drona were generally to oversee what was done

and what remained to be done. Vidura became the disburser and Duryodhana received the tributes that were brought by the kings. Krishna was engaged, at his own request, in washing the feet of the Brahmanas.

“Everyone attending the sacrifice honoured King Yudhishtira with tributes or large valuable presents. As if vying with Varuna himself in wealth, Yudhishtira celebrated the sacrifice of Rajasuya. He gratified everybody with costly presents and, indeed, with everything that one could desire. The gods were gratified at the sacrifice by the *Ida*, clarified butter, *Homa*, and libations poured by the great *Rishis* versed in *mantras* and pronunciation; the Brahmanas with the sacrificial gifts, food and great wealth; and all the other orders of men also were generally pleased.

“On the last day of the sacrifice, when the king was to be sprinkled over with the sacred water, the great Brahmana *Rishis*, along with the kings, assembled in the inner sanctum of the sacrificial site, looking like gods and celestial *Rishis* gathered in Brahma’s mansion.

“And Bhishma, addressing King Yudhishtira, said: ‘O Bharata, let *Arghyas* be duly offered unto the kings. The preceptor, the sacrificial priest, the kinsman, the *Snataka*, the friend, and the king, it hath been said, are the six that are deserving of *Arghya*. And let *Arghya* be presented first of all unto him who is the foremost among them.

“Hearing these words of Bhishma, Yudhishtira asked: ‘O Grandsire, whom dost thou deem the foremost amongst these and unto whom should the *Arghya* be presented by us, O tell me.’

“Then Bhishma said: ‘As the sun is foremost among all luminous objects, so is this Krishna among us all in splendour, might and valour. And this our sacrificial mansion is illumined and gladdened by him, as a sunless clime is by the appearance of the sun, or a windless region by a gust of breeze. Sahadeva accordingly presented the first *Arghya* unto him of the Vrishni race, and Krishna duly accepted

it. But Sisupala, the mighty king of Chedi, could not bear to see the reverence shown unto Vasudeva.

SISUPALA'S OBSTRUCTION

‘Sisupala said: ‘O thou of the Kuru race, this one of the Vrishni race doth not deserve royal worship, as if he were a king, in the midst of all these illustrious monarchs. This conduct of thine is not worthy of the illustrious Pandavas. Ye sons of Pandu, ye are children. Ye know not what Dharma is, for that is very subtle. This son of Ganga, of little knowledge, hath transgressed the rules of conduct in giving ye such counsel. How hath he of the Dasarha race, who is not a king at all and is not deserving of worship in the midst of these kings, been worshipped by ye? If thou regardest Krishna as the oldest in age, here is Vasudeva, and can his son be said to be so in his presence? Or, if thou regardest him as your well-wisher and supporter, when Drupada is here how can Madhava deserve the first worship? Or, regardest thou Krishna as preceptor? When Drona is here, how hast thou worshipped him of the Vrishni race? Or, regardest thou Krishna as the *Ritwija*? But when venerable Dwaipayana is present, how can Krishna take precedence? Again, when Bhishma (the oldest of your own family) whom death cannot approach save at his own wish is here, why, O king, hath Krishna been honoured? When there is the brave Aswatthaman, great in learning, why, O king, hath Krishna been worshipped by thee? When that prince of princes, Duryodhana, is here, as also Kripa, the preceptor of the Bharata princes, why hath Krishna been given the honour? There is also Karna, the favourite disciple of the Brahmana Jamadagnya, the hero who single-handed vanquished all monarchs in battle. Passing him over, how, O Bharata, hast thou offered the first worship unto Krishna? The slayer of Madhu is neither holy priest, nor preceptor, nor king. That thou shouldst have, nevertheless worshipped him, O chief of the Kurus, must be due purely

to selfish motives. If, O Bharata, it was your wish to offer the first worship unto him, why were these monarchs invited here? Was it to be insulted? We have not paid tribute to the illustrious son of Kunti from fear, from desire of gain, or out of friendship. On the other hand, we have paid him tribute simply because we thought he was desirous of the imperial dignity purely from lofty motives. And yet he it is that thus insulteth us. Indeed, it seems that the reputation for righteousness that the son of Dharma hath acquired is not genuine. This wretch, born in the race of the Vrishnis, unrighteously slew of old the illustrious king Jarasandha. Dharma hath to-day been abandoned by Yudhishtira. If the misguided sons of Kunti were disposed to meanness, thou, O Madhava, ought to have enlightened them as to thy unworthiness to be honoured first. Janardhana, this is really no insult offered unto the monarchs. On the other hand, it is thou whom the Kurus have disgraced. Indeed, O slayer of Madhu, as a wife is to one that is impotent, as a magnificent sight is to one that is blind, so is this royal worship to thee who art no king. What Yudhishtira really is hath been seen now; what Bhishma is hath been seen; and what this Vasudeva is hath been seen. Indeed, all these have been seen in their true colours.'

“Having spoken these words, Sisupala rose from his seat and, accompanied by the kings, walked out of the assembly.

Vaisampayana said: “Yudhishtira quickly ran after Sisupala and spoke to him sweetly and in a conciliating tone the following words:

‘O lord of earth, what thou hast said scarcely becomes thee. It is highly sinful and needlessly cruel. Insult not Bhishma by saying that he doth not know what virtue is. Behold, these many kings, older than thou, all approve of the worship offered unto Krishna. It behoveth thee to bear it patiently like them. O ruler of Chedi, Bhishma knoweth Krishna truly. Thou knowest him not so well as this one of the Kuru race.’

“Bhishma then said: ‘He that approveth not the worship offered unto Krishna, the oldest in the universe, deserveth neither soft words nor conciliation. I do not behold in this assembly of kings even one ruler who hath not been vanquished in battle by the energy of this son of the Satwata race. This one here, of undefiled glory, deserveth to be worshipped not only by us, but also by all the three worlds. The whole universe without limits is established in him of the Vrishni race. Therefore do we worship Krishna as the best and the oldest, and not others. And, O king of Chedi, it is not from caprice, or in view of our kinship or prospect of gain that we worship Janardhana who is worshipped by the good on earth and who is the source of the happiness of every creature. We have offered unto him the first worship on account of his fame, his heroism and his success. There is none here, even of tender years, whom we have not taken into consideration. Passing over many persons noted for their virtues, we have regarded Hari as deserving of the first worship. Amongst Brahmanas he that is superior in knowledge, amongst Kshatriyas he that is superior in strength, amongst Vaisyas he that is superior in possessions and wealth, and amongst Sudras he that is superior in years deserveth to be worshipped. Who else is there in the world of men so distinguished as Kesava? Indeed, charity, knowledge of the *Vedas*, bravery, modesty, achievements, great intelligence, humility, beauty, firmness, contentment, and prosperity—all these are personified in Achyuta. Therefore, ye kings, it behoveth ye to approve of the worship that hath been offered unto Krishna of great accomplishments and who is preceptor, father, and *guru*, worthy of the *Arghya* and deserving of worship. Krishna is the origin of the universe and that in which the universe is to dissolve. He is the unmanifest primal matter (*Avyakta Prakriti*), the creator, the eternal, and beyond (the ken of) all creatures. Therefore doth he of unfading glory deserve the highest honour. The intellect, the seat of sensibility, the primal elements, air, heat, water, space,

earth, and the four forms of life are all established in Krishna. The sun, the moon, the constellations, the planets, the principal directions, the intermediate directions, are all established in Krishna. As the *Agnihotra* is the foremost among all Vedic sacrifices, as the *Gayatri* is the foremost among metres, as the king is the foremost among men, as the ocean is the foremost among all rivers, as the moon is the foremost among all constellations, as the sun is the foremost among all luminous bodies, as the Meru is the foremost among all mountains, as Garuda is the foremost among all birds, so, as long as the upward, downward, and side-way course of the universe lasteth, is Kesava the foremost in all the worlds including the regions of the celestials. This Sisupala is a mere boy and hence he knoweth not Krishna, and ever and everywhere speaketh of Krishna thus. If Sisupala regardeth this worship as undeserved, it behoveth him to do what is proper in this matter.'

'After Krishna had received the first worship, Sisupala, with eyes red as copper from anger, addressed those assembled kings: 'When I am here to lead ye all, what are ye thinking of now? Arrayed let us stand in battle against the assembled Vrishnis and the Pandavas?' They all said, 'We must so act that the final sacrificial rite performed by Yudhishtira and the worship of Krishna may not be regarded as having been acquiesced in by us.'

Vaisampayana said: 'Beholding that vast assembly of kings agitated with wrath, even like the terrific sea agitated by the winds that blow at the time of the universal dissolution, Yudhishtira addressing the aged Bhishma, even like Puruhita (Indra) addressing Brihaspati, said: 'This vast ocean of kings hath been agitated by wrath. Tell me, O Grandsire, what I should do so that my sacrifice may not be obstructed and my subjects may not suffer.'

And Bhishma spoke: 'Fear not, O tiger of the Kurus; can the dog slay the lion? As dogs in a pack approaching the lion that is asleep bark together, so are all these lords of earth. Indeed, O child, like dogs before the lion, these

monarchs are barking in rage before the sleeping lion of the Vrishni race. Achyuta now is like a lion that is asleep. Until he waketh up, this chief of the Chedis maketh these monarchs look like lions. O thou foremost of all monarchs, this Sisupala, possessed of little intelligence, is desirous of taking along (with him) all these kings, through the agency of him who is the soul of the universe, to the regions of Yama. Assuredly, O Bharata, Vishnu seems desirous of taking back unto himself the energy that liveth in this Sisupala. The intelligence of this wicked-minded king of the Chedis, as also of all these monarchs, hath become perverse.'

"Sisupala retorted: 'Old and infamous wretch of thy race, art thou not ashamed of alarming all these monarchs with these numerous false terrors? Like a boat tied to another boat, or the blind following the blind, are the Kurus who have thee for their guide. Thou hast once more simply pained our hearts by reciting particularly the deeds of this Krishna, such as the slaying of Putana and others. Arrogant and ignorant as thou art, and desirous of praising Kesava, why doth not this tongue of thine split into a hundred parts? If Krishna in his infancy slew a vulture, what is there remarkable in that? O Bhishma, what is there remarkable in his having supported for a week the Govardhana mount which is like an ant-hill? But, was it not strange that Kansa, whose food this one ate, was slain by him? Thou infamous one of the Kuru race, thou art ignorant of the rules of morality. The virtuous and the wise hold that women, kine, Brahmanas and those whose hospitality hath been enjoyed should never be injured. It seemeth, O Bhishma, that all this teaching hath been lost on thee. Infamous one of the Kuru race, desiring to praise Kesava, thou describest him before me as great and superior in knowledge and in age, as if I knew nothing. If, at thy word, Bhishma, one that hath slain women and kine be worshipped, what then is to become of this great lesson? Every creature acts according to his disposition, even like the bird *Bhulinga* (that picks the particles

of flesh from between the lion's teeth, while all along preaching against rashness). Assuredly, thy nature is very mean. And it seemeth that the sons of Pandu, who regard Krishna as deserving of worship and who have thee for their guide, are also possessed of a sinful disposition. If thou knowest the ways of good conduct, if thy mind is guided by wisdom, blessed be thou. Why, O Bhishma, was that virtuous girl Amba, who had set her heart upon another, taken away by force by thee, so proud of wisdom and virtue? Thy brother Vichitra-virya, agreeably to the ways of the honest and the virtuous, knowing the girl's mind, married her not, though brought by thee. This thy celibacy, which thou leadest either from ignorance or impotence, is fruitless. Thou art childless, old and the expounder of false morality. Like the swan in the story thou shalt now die at the hands of thy relatives.

“There lived of yore an old swan on the sea-coast. Ever speaking of morality, but acting otherwise, it used to tell the feathery tribe: *‘Practise ye virtue and forego sin,’*—these were the words that other truthful birds constantly heard it utter. Leaving their eggs in its care, they ranged and dived in the waters of the sea and used to bring it food. The sinful old swan used to eat up the eggs of those birds that foolishly trusted it. After a while, when the eggs were regularly decreasing, another bird of great wisdom had its suspicions roused, and it even witnessed it eating the eggs one day; and in great sorrow reported it unto all the other birds. Then all those birds seeing with their own eyes what the old swan was doing slew the wretch.

“Thy behaviour, O Bhishma, is even like that of the old swan. These lords of earth might slay thee in anger even as those birds did.

“Can any one regard as praiseworthy the part played by Kesava, as also Bhima and Arjuna, in the slaying of Jarasandha? Entering by an improper gate, disguised as a Brahmana, this Krishna studied the strength of king Jarasandha. And when that monarch offered water to wash

his feet, it was then that he denied his Brahmanahood from seeming motives of virtue. If he is the lord of the Universe, as this fool representeth why doth he not regard himself as a Brahmana? What, however, surpriseth me greatly is that, though thou ledest the Pandavas away from the path of the wise, they yet regard thee as honest. Or, perhaps, this is scarcely a matter of surprise when they have thee, O Bharata, womanish in disposition and bent down with age, as their counsellor.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Hearing these words of Sisupala, harsh both in import and tone, that foremost of mighty men, Bhimasena, ground his teeth in rage, and his face resembled that of Death himself, at the end of the *Yuga*, prepared to swallow every creature. And as that hero was about to leap up impetuously, the mighty-armed Bhishma caught him like Mahadeva seizing Mahasena (the celestial generalissimo). But, O king, even though Bhima was angry, the brave Sisupala was not frightened. And though Bhima was leaping up impetuously every moment, Sisupala bestowed not a single thought on him, like a lion that reckes not a little animal in rage. The powerful king Chedi said in disdain: 'Release him, Bhishma. Let all the monarchs behold him scorched by my prowess like an insect in fire.' Hearing these words of the ruler of the Chedis, Bhishma spoke unto Bhima these words.

"Bhishma said: 'This Sisupala was born with three eyes and four hands. As soon as he was born, he screamed and brayed like an ass, and his father and mother along with their relatives were struck with fear. Beholding these extraordinary omens, his parents resolved to abandon him. But an incorporeal voice said: 'This thy son, O king, that hath been born, will be both fortunate and mighty. Cherish the child without any anxiety. He will not die in childhood. His time is not yet come. He that will one day slay him with weapons hath also been born.' Hearing these words, the mother addressed the invisible Being and said: 'I bow with joined hands unto him that hath uttered these

words respecting my son; whether he be an exalted divinity or any other being, I desire to hear who will be the slayer of this my son.' The invisible Being then said: 'He will be his slayer, on placing on whose lap the child sheds the superfluous arms and on seeing whom the third eye on the forehead disappears.' Hearing of the child's three eyes and four arms as also of the words of the invisible Being, all the kings of the earth went to behold him. The king of Chedi placed his child upon their laps one after another; yet, what the incorporeal voice had said came not to pass. And having heard of all this at Dwaravati, the mighty Yadava heroes Sankarshana and Janardhana also went to the capital of the Chedis to see their father's sister (the queen of Chedi). As soon as the child was placed on Janardhana's lap the superfluous arms came off and the eye on his forehead also disappeared. And beholding this the queen in alarm and anxiety begged of Krishna a boon. And she said: 'O mighty-armed Krishna, I am struck with fear; grant me a boon. Thou art the refuge of all afflicted ones and the dispeller of all fear.' Thus addressed by her, Krishna said: 'Thou hast nothing to fear from me. What boon shall I give thee? What shall I do, O aunt? I will do thy bidding.' And the queen answered: 'O thou of great strength, thou wilt have to pardon the offences of Sisupala for my sake. Know that even this is the boon that I ask.' Krishna then said: 'Even when he deserves to be slain, I will pardon a hundred offences of his. Grieve thou not'.

'Bhishma continued: 'That which urgeth the ruler of Chedi to summon thee to fight could scarcely be his own will; assuredly, it is the purpose of Krishna himself, the lord of the universe. Bhima, what king is there on earth that would dare to abuse me as this wretch, already in Death's grasp, hath done to-day? This mighty-armed one is, without doubt, a portion of Hari's energy. And surely, the Lord desireth to take back unto himself that energy of his own.'

'Hearing these words of Bhishma, the king of Chedi could not contain himself. He replied in rage:

“Bhishma, if thy mind is always inclined to sing the praises of others, why dost thou not praise Salya and other rulers of the earth? Hast thou never heard that reproach and glorification, both of self and others, are not acts worthy of those that are honourable? There is no one that approveth thy conduct in praising unceasingly, out of sheer ignorance, this Kesava so unworthy of praise. How dost thou, merely by wishful thinking, establish the whole universe in the servitor and cowherd of Bhoja (Kansa)? And assuredly, Bhishma, thou art alive only at the pleasure of these kings.”

“Hearing these harsh words of the ruler of Chedi, Bhishma rejoined: ‘I am alive, indeed, at the pleasure of these rulers of the earth! I regard these kings as not worth a straw.’ As soon as these words were spoken by Bhishma, the kings turned red with wrath. Some amongst them exclaimed: ‘This wretched Bhishma, though old, is exceedingly boastful. He deserveth not our pardon. Therefore, ye kings, it is well that this wretch were slain like an animal. Or, mustering together, let us burn him in a fire of grass or straw.’ Hearing these words of the monarchs, Bhishma, said: ‘There is no end to speeches, for words may be answered with words. Therefore, ye lords of earth, listen ye all unto what I say. Whether I be slain like an animal or burnt in a fire of grass and straw, this I say that I do place my foot thus on the heads of ye all. Here is Govinda that knoweth no diminution. Him have we worshipped. Let him who wisheth for speedy death summon to battle Madhava of dark hue and the wielder of the discus and the mace; and falling, enter into and mingle with the body of this god.’

Vaisampayana said: “The ruler of Chedi anxious to fight with Vasudeva then said: ‘Janardhana, I challenge thee. Come, fight with me until I slay thee to-day with all the Pandavas. For, the sons of Pandu who, over-looking all these kings, have worshipped thee who art no king deserve also to be slain along with thee.’ Having said this, that tiger among kings stood there roaring in anger.

Then, Krishna addressing all the kings calmly spoke: 'Ye kings, this evil-minded one, who is the son of a daughter of our race, is a great enemy of us of the Satwata race; and though we never did him any ill he yet seeketh our evil. This wretch of cruel deeds, ye kings, hearing that we had gone to the city of Pragjyotisha, came and burnt Dwaraka, although he is the son of my father's sister. While King Bhoja was sporting on the Raivataka hill, this one fell upon the attendants of that king and slew and led away many of them in chains to his own city. Always sinful in intent, this wretch, in order to obstruct the sacrifice of my father, stole the sacrificial horse. This one ravished the reluctant wife of the innocent Babhru (Akrura) on her way from Dwaraka to the country of the Sauviras. Again, this injurer of his maternal uncle, disguising himself in the attire of the king of Karusha, ravished also the innocent Bhadra, the princess of Visala, the intended bride of King Karusha. I have patiently borne all these sorrows for the sake of my father's sister. Ye have all seen to-day the hostility this one beareth towards me. And know ye also all that he hath done to me behind my back. For the overweening pride in which he hath indulged in the presence of all these monarchs, he deserveth to be slain by me. I am ill able to pardon to-day the injuries that he hath done me. Courting speedy death, this fool had aspired for the hand of Rukmini. But the fool obtained her not, even as a Sudra is precluded from hearing the *Vedas*.'

“Hearing these words of Vasudeva, all the assembled monarchs began to reprove the ruler of Chedi. But the powerful Sisupala laughed aloud and spoke thus: 'Krishna, art thou not ashamed to say in this assembly, especially before all these kings, that Rukmini (thy wife) had been intended for me? Is there any one save thee, who regardeth himself a man and would say in the midst of respectable men that his wife had been intended for some body else? Krishna, pardon me if thou pleasest, or pardon me not. But angry or friendly, what canst thou do to me?'

“And while Sisupala was speaking thus, the exalted slayer of Madhu invoked the discus that humbleth the pride of the *Asuras*. And as soon as the discus came into his hands the illustrious one loudly uttered these words: ‘Listen ye lords of earth, why this one had hitherto been pardoned by me. At his mother’s request, a hundred offences of his were to be pardoned by me. Even this was the boon she had asked and even this I granted her. That number, ye kings, hath become full. I shall now slay him in your presence, ye monarchs.’ Having said this, the chief of the Yadus instantly cut off the head of the ruler of Chedi with his discus. And Sisupala fell down like a cliff struck by thunder. O monarch, the assembled kings then beheld a fierce flash of energy, like unto the sun in the sky, issue out of the body of the king of Chedi. That energy then adoring Krishna, possessed of eyes like lotus leaves and universally worshipped, entered his body. And the sky, though cloudless, poured torrents of rain; blasting thunders were hurled and the earth itself began to tremble. Some there were among the kings who became speechless during those tense moments, and merely sat gazing at Janardhana. And some there were that in rage rubbed their palms with their fore-fingers. Others, bewildered by wrath, bit their lips with their teeth. And some amongst the kings in their inmost hearts applauded him of the Vrishni race. Some there were that got excited with anger; while some became mediators. The great *Rishis* and the Brahmanas were pleased and they all extolled Kesava.

“Yudhishtira then commanded his brothers to perform the funeral rites of King Sisupala with regal honours and duly installed the son of King Sisupala in the sovereignty of the Chedis.

“All impediments now removed, Yudhishtira in due course completed the great sacrifice. And the mighty-armed Janardhana, armed with his bow called *Saranga* and his discus and mace, guarded that sacrifice till its completion.

“After all the kings and the Brahmanas had departed, Vasudeva addressing Yudhishtira said: ‘O son of the Kuru race, with thy leave I also desire to return to Dwaraka. By great good fortune, thou hast accomplished the foremost of sacrifices—Rajasuya.’ And Yudhishtira replied: ‘By thy grace, O Govinda, I have accomplished the great sacrifice. And it is owing to thee that the whole Kshatriya world having accepted my sway came hither with valuable tribute.’ Accompanied by his brothers, Yudhishtira followed the mighty Vasudeva on foot for some distance. Then Hari, stopping for a moment, said: ‘O king of kings, cherish thou thy subjects with ceaseless vigilance and patience. As the clouds are unto all creatures, as the large tree of outspread boughs is unto birds, and he of a thousand eyes unto the immortals, so be thou the refuge and support of thy kin’.”

YUDHISHTHIRA'S ANXIETY

Vaisampayana said: “When that foremost of sacrifices, the Rajasuya, so difficult of accomplishment, was completed, Vyasa with his disciples came to take leave of Yudhishtira. And the illustrious *Rishi* said: ‘O son of Kunti, thou hast obtained imperial sway so difficult of acquisition and increased the prosperity of the Kauravas. O Emperor, I have been duly honoured and with thy leave I now desire to go.’ King Yudhishtira saluted his grand-sire and touching his feet said: ‘O chief of men, a doubt difficult of being dispelled hath risen within me; save thee no one can remove it. The illustrious *Rishi* Narada said that, following the Rajasuya sacrifice, there would be three kinds of portents, celestial, atmospherical and terrestrial. O grand-sire, have those portents ended with the fall of the king of the Chedis?’

“Vyasa of dark hue spoke: ‘For thirteen years, O king those portents will bear mighty consequences, leading to the destruction of all the Kshatriyas. In due course, with thee as the sole cause, the assembled Kshatriyas of the world will all be destroyed, for the sins of Duryodhana, through the might

of Bhima and Arjuna. In thy dream to-night thou wilt behold the blue-throated Bhava. Thou wilt behold Siva, tall and white as the Kailasa cliff, seated on his bull, gazing unceasingly towards the direction (south) presided over by the king of *Pitris*. Even this will be the dream thou wilt have to-day. Do not grieve for dreaming such a dream. None can rise superior to the influence of Time. Blest be thou. I will now proceed towards the Kailasa mountain. Rule thou the earth with vigilance and steadiness, patiently bearing every privation.'

"And after the grand-sire left, the king began to ponder deeply upon what the *Rishi* had said. Then, addressing all his brothers, Yudhishtira said: 'Ye have heard what the island-born *Rishi* hath told me. Having thought over the words of the *Rishi*, I have come to this resolution, namely, that I would die rather than cause the destruction of all Kshatriyas'. And Arjuna observed, 'O king, yield not to this terrible depression that is destructive of reason. Mustering fortitude, do what would be beneficial.' Yudhishtira then told his brothers: 'Listen to my vow from this day. I shall not speak a harsh word to my brothers or to any of the kings of the earth. If I live in this way, making no distinction between my own children and others, there will be no room for disagreement between me and others. It is disagreement that is the cause of war in the world.'

After performing the usual auspicious rites Yudhishtira re-entered his own palace accompanied by his brothers and ministers. And Duryodhana and Sakuni continued to dwell in that delightful assembly house for some time."

DURYODHANA'S JEALOUSY AND SAKUNI'S COUNSEL

Vaisampayana said: "The Kuru prince examined the whole of that mansion leisurely and beheld in it many celestial designs which he had never seen before in his own city of Hastinapura. One day, while inspecting that mansion, he

came upon a crystal surface, and mistaking it for a pool of water he drew up his clothes, but soon found out his mistake. Again, mistaking a lake of crystal water adorned with lotuses of crystal petals for land, he fell into it with all his clothes on. Beholding Duryodhana fallen into the lake, the mighty Bhima laughed aloud as also the menials of the palace, and Duryodhana could not bear to see them laughing at him. A little later he mistook a closed door made of crystal as open, and, as he was about to pass through it, his head struck against it and he stood with his head swimming. And mistaking as closed another door made of crystal that was really open, the king in attempting to open it with stretched hands tumbled down. Chancing upon another door that was really open, the king, thinking it as closed, went away from it. Jealous of the vast wealth he had seen at the Rajasuya sacrifice and smarting under the many humiliating mistakes he had made in the assembly house he at last returned to Hastinapura.

“The prince thought of nothing except that assembly house and the unrivalled prosperity of Yudhishtira; and was so taken up with his thoughts that he spoke not a word to Suvala's son even though the latter addressed him repeatedly. Seeing him thus disturbed in mind, Sakuni said: ‘Duryodhana, why art thou sighing thus?’

“Duryodhana replied: ‘Uncle, beholding this whole earth owning the sway of Yudhishtira and beholding also that sacrifice of the son of Pritha, like unto the sacrifice of Sakra himself of great glory among the celestials, I am consumed with jealousy day and night and am drying up like a shallow tank in the summer season. I shall throw myself upon a flaming fire or swallow poison or drown myself. I cannot live any longer. Who is there in the world possessed of vigour that can bear to see his foes prospering and himself in destitution? Alone, I am incapable of acquiring such royal prosperity; nor do I behold allies that could help me in the task. It seems fate is supreme and exertion fruitless. In the past, I strove to compass his

destruction. But, baffling all my efforts, Yudhishtira hath grown in prosperity, even like the lotus from within a pool of water. The sons of Dhritharashtra are decaying and the sons of Pritha are growing in prosperity from day to day. Beholding their prosperity and that assembly house of theirs, and recollecting those menials laughing at me, my heart burneth as if it were on fire. Therefore, uncle, know me now as sorely grieved and filled with jealousy, and speak of it to Dhritharashtra.'

"Sakuni said: 'Duryodhana, thou shouldst not be jealous of Yudhishtira. The sons of Pandu are enjoying the fruits of their good fortune. Thou sayest that thou art without allies. This, O Bharata, is not true. These thy brothers are obedient to thee. There is Drona of great prowess and wielding the large bow; his son; Radha's son Karna; the great warrior Gautama (Kripa); myself with my brothers and king Saumadatti. All these are thy allies. Uniting thyself with these, conquer thou the whole world.'

"(Heartened by these words) Duryodhana said: 'O king, with the aid of thee, as also of these great warriors, I shall subjugate the Pandavas. If I can now subjugate them, the world will be mine, together with all the monarchs and that assembly house so full of wealth.'

"Sakuni replied: 'Dhananjaya and Vasudeva, Bhimasena and Yudhishtira, Nakula, Sahadeva and Drupada with his sons—these cannot be vanquished in battle even by the celestials. But I know the means by which Yudhishtira himself may be vanquished. Listen to me and adopt it.'

"Duryodhana said: 'Tell me, uncle, a way whereby I may vanquish him without danger to our friends and other illustrious men.'

"Sakuni said: 'The son of Kunti is very fond of gambling although he doth not know how to play (dice). If asked to play, he will not refuse. There is no one equal to me at dice on this earth—no, not even in the three worlds. Therefore, ask him to play at dice and I will win his kingdom and that splendid prosperity of his for thee. But first put this to the king

(Dhritharashtra). Commanded by thy father I will, without doubt, win the whole of Yudhishtira's possessions.'

"Duryodhana said: 'O son of Suvala, thou thyself represent all this properly to Dhritharashtra. I shall not be able to do so.'

Vaisampayana said: "Accordingly, Sakuni approached Dhritharashtra and spoke these words: 'Know, O great king, that Duryodhana hath become pale, emaciated, depressed and a prey to anxiety. Why dost thou not ascertain what grieveth him?'

"Dhritharashtra asked: 'Duryodhana, what is the reason for thy great affliction? If it is fit for me to hear it, then tell me the reason. Sakuni says that thou hast lost colour, become pale and emaciated, and a prey to anxiety. I do not know what can be the reason of thy sorrow. This vast wealth of mine is at thy command. Thy brothers and all our kinsmen never do anything that is disagreeable to thee. Thou wearest the best apparel and eatest the daintiest dishes. The best of horses carry thee. Costly beds, beautiful damsels, mansions replete with beautiful furniture, and pleasant sport, all these without doubt await thy command. Therefore, why dost thou grieve, son, as if thou wert destitute?'

"Duryodhana replied: 'I eat and dress myself like a wretch and pass my time, all the while a prey to fierce jealousy. After seeing Yudhishtira's prosperity, whatever I have gratifieth me not. And, O king, the prosperity of Yudhishtira was such as neither the chief of the celestials himself, nor Yama, Varuna, or the lord of the Guhyakas owneth. And beholding it, my heart burneth and I cannot enjoy peace.'

"At these words of Duryodhana, Sakuni said: 'Hear how thou mayest obtain this unrivalled prosperity. I am an adept at dice; I can anticipate the success or otherwise of every throw, and when to stake and when not. The son of Kunti also is fond of the game, though he possesseth little skill. Summoned to play or battle, he is sure to accept the

challenge, and I will defeat him at every throw by deceiving him and I promise to win all that wealth of his.'

"Duryodhana eagerly appealed to Dhritarashtra: 'O king, it behoveth thee to grant him permission to do so.'

"Dhritarashtra replied: 'I always follow the counsel of Kshatta, my minister of great wisdom. After consulting him, I shall tell thee what I think of this proposal.'

Duryodhana (in disappointment) said: 'If thou consultest Kshatta, he will make thee desist. In that event, O king, I will surely kill myself. And when I am dead, thou canst be happy with Vidura and enjoy the whole earth; what need hast thou of me?'

Vaisampayana continued: "Although he knew the evils of gambling yet Dhritarashtra was attracted by the idea. The intelligent Vidura, however, as soon as he heard of it, knew that the arrival of Kali was at hand. And seeing that the way to destruction was about to open, he rushed to Dhritarashtra and, bowing down, said:

'O exalted king, I do not approve of the resolution that thou hast made. It behoveth thee to act in such a way that no dispute arises between thy children on account of this gambling match.'

Janamejaya said: "O thou foremost of all conversant with the *Vedas*, how did that game at dice take place, fraught with such evil to the cousins and through which my grand-sires were plunged into such sorrow? What kings also were present in that assembly, and who amongst them approved of the gambling match and who amongst them forbade it? I desire thee to recite it in detail."

Vaisampayana said: "O great king, if thou desirest to hear, then listen to me as I narrate to thee everything in detail.

"Ascertaining the opinion of Vidura, Dhritarashtra told Duryodhana: 'O son of Gandhari, have nothing to do with dice. Vidura doth not commend it. Endowed with great wisdom, he never gives me advice that is not for my good. As the wise Uddhava is ever regarded amongst the

Vrishnis, so is Vidura of great intelligence esteemed as the foremost of the Kurus. Therefore, son, have nothing to do with dice. It is evident that dice soweth dissensions; and dissensions ruin the kingdom. Abandon therefore the idea of gambling.'

"Duryodhana replied: 'Beholding that blazing prosperity of the son of Kunti, I am deeply pained. O monarch, regarding me as the eldest and entitled to respect, Yudhishtira received me respectfully and entrusted me with the task of receiving the presents that were brought as tribute. O Bharata, anything like the quantity and quality of the invaluable jewels that were brought there have not been seen before. And my hands were tired of receiving that wealth. Bringing precious stones from the lake Bindu, the *Asura* architect Maya constructed, for the Pandavas, a lake-like surface made of crystal. Beholding the artificial lotuses with which it was filled I mistook it for water. And seeing me draw up my clothes while about to cross it, Vrikodara laughed at me. If I had the strength, I would, O king, without the loss of a moment, slay Vrikodara for that. Again, beholding a similar lake that was really full of water but which I mistook for a crystal surface, I fell into it. At that, Bhima with Arjuna once more laughed merrily, and so did Draupadi and her companions. That paineth my heart exceedingly. In attempting to pass through what was exactly of the shape of a door but through which there was really no passage, I struck my forehead against a stone and injured myself. The twins (Nakula and Sahadeva) came and supported me in their arms, expressing great concern. Sahadeva repeatedly told me, half smiling, 'This, O king, is the door. Go this way !' And Bhimasena, laughing aloud, said, 'O son of Dhritharashtra, this is the door.' And, O king, I had not even heard of the names of many of the gems that I saw in that mansion.'

"And only two do not pay tribute unto the son of Kunti, namely, the Panchalas owing to their relationship by marriage, and the Andhakas and Vrishnis owing to their friendship.'

“Kings revered all over the world all wait upon and worship Yudhishtira. For bathing Yudhishtira at the conclusion of the sacrifice, many kings, with the greatest alacrity, fetched themselves many jars of holy water. And King Vahlika brought a car decked with pure gold; King Sudakshina himself yoked thereto four white horses of Kamboja breed; Sunitha of great might fitted the lower pole, and the Ruler of Chedi took up and fitted the flag-staff with his own hands. The King of the South country stood ready with the coat of mail; the Ruler of Magadha, with garlands of flowers and the head gear; the great warrior Vasudana, with a sixty-year old elephant; the King of Matsya, with the side-fittings of the car all encased in gold; King Ekalavya, with the shoes; the King of Avanti, with diverse kinds of water for the final bath; King Chekitana, with the quiver; the King of Kasi with the bow; and Salya, with a sword whose hilt and straps were adorned with gold. Then Dhaumya and Vyasa of great ascetic merit, headed by Narada and Asita's son Devala, performed the ceremony of sprinkling the sacred water over the king. Satyaki of unbaffled prowess held the umbrella over the king's head; Dhananjaya and Bhima were engaged in fanning the king; while the twins held a couple of *chamaras* in their hands. And the Ocean himself brought in a sling that big conch of Varuna which the celestial artificer Viswakarman had made with a thousand *Nishkas* of gold, and which Prajapati had in a former *Kalpa* presented unto Indra. It was with that conch that Krishna bathed Yudhishtira after the conclusion of the sacrifice, and beholding it I went into a faint. And O exalted one, when such is the glory of the son of Pritha I do not see any use in continuing to live.’

“Dhritharashtra said: ‘Son, be not jealous of the Pandavas. He that is jealous is always unhappy and suffereth the pangs of death. Yudhishtira knoweth not deception, hath thy friends for his, and is not jealous of thee. Why shouldst thou, therefore, be jealous of him? In the matter of friends

and allies thou art equal unto Yudhishtira. Why shouldst thou, therefore, covet, from folly, the property of thy brother? Do not grieve. If thou covetest the dignity attaching to the performance of a sacrifice, let the priests arrange for thee that great sacrifice called the *Saptatantu*. The kings of the earth will then gladly present thee also with much wealth. The sons of Pandu are as thy arms. Do not lop off those arms of thine. Plunge not into internal dissensions for the sake of that wealth of thy brothers'.

'Duryodhana (in desperation) said: 'Thou knowest everything, but yet confoundest me. Like a boat linked to another, thou and I are tied to each other. Art thou unmindful of thy own interests? Or, dost thou entertain hostile feelings towards me? These thy sons and allies are doomed to destruction, inasmuch as they have thee for their ruler; for thou puttest off for the future what ought to be done now. It behoveth thee not to confound us who are ready to seek our own interests. Brihaspati hath said that the practice of kings is different from those of common people. The conduct of a Kshatriya is governed by the sole consideration whether it leadeth to success. In the observance, therefore, of the duties of one's own order why need one be scrupulous whether the means employed be fair or foul. Who is to be reckoned a foe and who a friend doth not depend on one's favour or stature. He that giveth pain to another is, O king, to be regarded as a foe by him who is wronged. Discontent is the source of prosperity. Therefore, I choose to be discontented. Like a snake that swalloweth up frogs and other creatures living in holes, the earth swalloweth up a king that is peaceful and a Brahmana that stirreth not out of home. O Bharata, let not the prosperity of the foe be acceptable to thee. Coveting as I do the prosperity of the Pandavas, I have not yet made it my own. At present I am a prey to doubts as regards my ability to do so. I am determined to resolve these doubts of mine. I will either win that prosperity of theirs or fall in battle.'

"This Sakuni, skilled at dice, is ready, O king, to snatch the prosperity of the son of Pandu by means of dice. It behoveth thee to give him permission."

"Dhritharashtra said: 'Son, hostility with the strong never recommendeth itself to me. Hostility bringeth about a change of feelings and that itself is weapon enough, though not made of steel. Thou regardest, Prince, that as a great blessing which is really fraught with mischief and will bring in its train the terrible consequences of war. If once it beginneth, it will create sharp swords and pointed arrows.'

"Duryodhana replied: 'Men of very ancient times invented the use of dice. There is no question of any destruction in it, nor is there any use of weapons. Let the words of Sakuni, therefore, be acceptable to thee, and let orders be issued for the speedy construction of the assembly house.'

"Dhritharashtra said: 'The words uttered by thee do not recommend themselves to me. Do as it pleaseth thee. But thou shalt regret doing so. That great calamity destructive of the lives of the Kshatriyas, however, cometh as ordained by Fate.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Having said this, the weak-minded Dhritharashtra resigned himself to fate which he regarded as inexorable and ordered saying, 'Carefully construct, without loss of time, an assembly house of the most beautiful description, to be called the *crystal-arched* palace, with a thousand columns, decked with gold and *lapis lazuli*, provided with a hundred gates, and full two miles in length and the same in breadth.' When the palace was ready Dhritharashtra told Vidura: 'Repairing to Khadavaprastha bring prince Yudhishtira here without loss of time. Coming hither with his brothers let him behold this beautiful assembly house of mine and let a friendly match at dice be played here.'

"Vidura, however, approved not his brother's words and spoke thus: 'I approve not, O king, of this command of thine. I fear this will bring about the destruction of our

race. Dissensions will certainly ensue amongst thy sons as a result of this match at dice.'

'Dhritharashtra said: 'If Fate be not unfavourable to me this will not cause me any grief. The whole universe moveth, at the will of its Creator, under the controlling influence of Fate. It is not free. Therefore, Vidura, bring thou soon that invincible son of Kunti'."

THE DICE MATCH

'Vidura then set out, much against his will, for the abode of the wise sons of Pandu. Welcoming him Yudhishtira said: 'O Kshatta, thou seemest to be cheerless. Is everything faring well? I hope the sons of Dhritharashtra and the people are all obedient to the king.'

'Vidura said: 'The illustrious king and his sons are well and happy. He hath commanded me to enquire after thy welfare and ask thee to repair to Hastinapura with thy brothers and say whether his newly erected palace is equal to thy own. Repairing thither with thy brothers, enjoy ye in that mansion and play a friendly match at dice. The Kurus have already arrived there, and thou wilt also see there the gamblers—the cheats—that the illustrious king Dhritharashtra hath collected.'

'Yudhishtira said: 'Kshatta, if we play a match at dice we may quarrel. Knowing this, who will consent to gambling? What dost thou think fit for us to do? We are all obedient to thy counsels.'

'Vidura said: 'I know that gambling is the root of misery, and I strove to dissuade the king from it. Nevertheless, he hath sent me to thee. Now do what you deem fit.'

'Yudhishtira asked: 'Besides the sons of Dhritharashtra what other dishonest gamblers are there anxious to play? Tell us who they are with whom we shall have to play staking hundreds upon hundreds of our possessions.'

'Vidura replied: 'Sakuni, the king of Gandhara, adept at dice and desperate in stakes, Vivingati, king Chitrasena,

Satyavrata, Purumitra and Jaya—these, O king, are there.'

"Yudhishtira said: 'It would seem then that some of the most desperate and terrible gamblers who ever practise deceit are there. This whole universe, however, is, at the will of its Maker, under the control of Fate. It is not free. I do not desire, merely at the command of king Dhritharashtra, to indulge in gambling. At the same time, a father's behests are well meant and are always in the interests of the son. Tell me, therefore, what is proper for us to do. Unwilling as I am to gamble, I will not do so if the wicked Sakuni doth not summon me to it in the *Sabha*? If, however, he challengeth me, I will never refuse. For that is my rule.'

"And the next day, the king accompanied by his relatives and attendants set out for the capital of the Kurus, saying to himself: '*Like some brilliant body dazzling the eyes, Fate depriveth us of reason, and man, pulled as it were with a rope, submitteth to the sway of Providence.*' Arriving at Hastinapura he approached king Dhritharashtra who smelt his head as also the heads of those four other princes. And commanded by the king, the Pandavas then retired to the chambers allotted to them which were all richly furnished. They rose at dawn and, having gone through the usual rites, they entered the assembly house and were greeted by those that were already there to play.

"After they had taken their seats, Sakuni addressed Yudhishtira and said: 'O king, the assembly is full. All have been waiting for thee. Let, therefore, the rules of play be fixed and the dice be cast.'

"Yudhishtira replied: 'Deceitful gambling is sinful. There is no Kshatriya prowess in it and there is certainly no virtue in it. Why, then, O king, dost thou praise gambling so much? The wise applaud not the pride that gamesters feel in deceitful play.'

"Sakuni said: 'That astute player who knoweth the secrets of winning and losing and who is skilled in baffling the deceitful arts of his opponent truly knoweth the play,

and he suffereth all in the course of it. O son of Pritha, it is the staking at dice, involving as it does loss or gain, that may be regarded as injurious, and it is for that reason that gambling is regarded as wrong. But fear not. Let the stakes be fixed. Delay not.'

"Yudhishtira said: 'That best of *Munis*, Devala, hath said that it is sinful to play deceitfully with a gamester. Conquest in battle by fair means is much the best sport, and not gambling. War conducted intelligently and without crookedness—that is the part of men that are honest. I do not desire to win either happiness or wealth by unfair means.'

"Sakuni said: 'Yudhishtira, it is generally from a desire to get the better of another, which is not a very honest motive, that one superior person approacheth another in a contest. It is with the object of vanquishing that one learned person approacheth others less learned. Such motives, however, are scarcely regarded as really dishonest. So also, a person skilled at dice approacheth one that is not so skilled with the object of scoring a victory over him. And one that is skilled in weapons approacheth one that is not so skilled; the strong approacheth the weak. This is the case in every contest. The motive is victory. If, however, thou regardest me to be actuated by motives that are dishonest, if thou art under any fear, desist then from play.'

"Yudhishtira said: 'Summoned, I do not withdraw. That is my rule. O king, Fate is all powerful. We are all under the control of Destiny. With whom in this assembly am I to play? Who is there that can stake equally with me? Let the play begin.'

"Duryodhana said: 'I shall supply jewels, gems and every kind of wealth. And this Sakuni, my uncle, will play for me.'

"Yudhishtira said: 'Gambling by proxy seemeth to me to be contrary to rules. But if thou art still bent on it, let the play begin.'

Vaisampayana said: "When the play commenced, all the kings there with Dhritarashtra at their head took their

seats in the assembly. And Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and the high-souled Vidura sat behind with cheerless hearts.

“Yudhishtira said: ‘O king, this string of excellent pearls of great value, procured of old from the ocean by churning it, so beautiful and decked with pure gold—this is my stake. What is thy counter-stake?’

“Duryodhana said: ‘I have also many jewels. I do not set much store by them. Win thou this stake.’

“Then Sakuni took up the dice and (casting them) said unto Yudhishtira, ‘Lo, I have won.’

“Yudhishtira said: ‘Thou hast won this stake of me by unfair means. But be not so proud, Sakuni. Let us play staking thousands upon thousands. I have many chests in my treasury each full of a thousand *Nishkas*, inexhaustible gold, much silver and other metals. This is the wealth which I will stake with thee.’

“Thus addressed, Sakuni casting the dice said: ‘Lo, I have won.’

“Yudhishtira said: ‘This my sacred and victorious royal car, which is equal unto a thousand cars and is drawn by eight noble steeds known all over the kingdom, white as moonlight (the lily) and from whose hoofs no earthly creature can escape—this is the wealth which I stake with thee.’

“Sakuni ready with the dice, and adopting unfair means, said unto Yudhishtira, ‘Lo, I have won!’

“Yudhishtira said: ‘I have a hundred thousand maid servants, all young and decked with golden bracelets on their wrists and upper arms, and with *Nishkas* round their necks and other ornaments, attired in rich robes and daubed with sandal paste, well-skilled in the four and sixty elegant arts, especially in dancing and singing, and who wait upon and serve at my command the celestials, the Snataka Brahmanas, and kings. With this wealth, O king, I will play with thee.’

“And Sakuni ready with the dice, adopting unfair means, said unto Yudhishtira, ‘Lo, I have won.’

“Yudhishtira said: ‘I have, O son of Suvala, one thousand mighty elephants with golden girdles, decked with

ornaments, with the mark of the lotus on their temples, necks and other parts, adorned with golden garlands, having fine white tusks long and thick as plough-shafts and worthy of carrying kings on their backs. With this wealth I will play with thee.'

"Unto Yudhishtira who had said so, Sakuni said laughing: 'Lo, I have won it.'

"Yudhishtira said: 'I have as many cars as elephants, all furnished with golden poles and flag-staffs and well-trained horses. This wealth, I will wager.'

"The wretch Sakuni, pledged to enmity, said unto Yudhishtira, 'Lo, I have won it.'

"Yudhishtira said: 'I have four hundred *Nidis* encased in sheets of copper and iron. Each one of them is equal to five *draunikas* of the costliest and purest leaf gold of the *Jatarupa* kind. This wealth, O king, I will offer as wager.'

"Sakuni ready at dice, adopting foul means, said unto Yudhishtira, 'Lo I have won it'."

VIDURA'S EFFORTS TO STOP THE PLAY

"Vaisampayana said: "While the play was going on, Vidura spoke to Dhritarashtra: 'O great king, hearken to what I say, although my words may not be agreeable to thee, like medicine to one that is ill and about to breathe his last. When this Duryodhana of sinful mind, immediately after his birth, cried discordantly like a jackal, it was understood that he had been ordained to bring about the destruction of the Bharata race. Know that he will be the death of ye all. A jackal is living in thy house in the form of Duryodhana. Thou knowest it not in consequence of thy folly. Listen now to the words of the poet (Sukra) which I will quote: 'They that collect honey in the mountains mark not that they are about to fall. Ascending to dangerous heights, absorbed in the pursuit of what they seek, they fall down and meet with destruction.' This Duryodhana also, maddened with the play at dice, heedeth not

the consequences. Making enemies of these great warriors, he seeth not the abyss that is before him. It is known to thee, O thou of great wisdom, that, amongst the Bhojas, they abandoned, for the good of the citizens, a son that was unworthy of their race. The Andhakas, the Yadavas, and the Bhojas uniting together abandoned Kansa. So let Arjuna slay this Suyodhana. In exchange for a crow, O great king, buy these peacocks—the Pandavas; and in exchange for a jackal, buy these tigers. It is said that a certain king, having allowed a number of wild birds that vomited gold to take up their habitation in his own house, afterwards killed them from temptation. Blinded by temptation, the king destroyed at the same time both his present and future (gains). Therefore, O king, persecute not the Pandavas from desire of profit, even like the king in the story. Like a flower-seller that daily plucketh (many flowers) in the garden from trees that he cherisheth with affection, continue, O Bharata, to pluck flowers, day by day, from the Pandavas. Do not scorch them to their roots like a fire-producing breeze that reduceth everything to black charcoal. Duryodhana is gambling with the son of Pandu, and thou art in raptures over his winning. And it is such success that breedeth war, ending in the destruction of men.'

“Vidura finally appealed: ‘Listen, ye sons of Santanu, ye descendants of Pratipa, who are now in this assembly of the Kauravas, to these words of wisdom. Enter ye not into the terrible fire that hath blazed forth; follow not this wretch; for, mistake not, when Ajatasatru, intoxicated with dice, giveth way to wrath along with Vrikodara, Arjuna and the twins and the day of reckoning comes, it is the Pandavas who will be your refuge and not Duryodhana. O great king, thou art thyself a mine of wealth. Thou canst earn (by other means) as much wealth as thou seekest to earn by gambling. What dost thou profit by winning from the Pandavas their vast wealth? Win the Pandavas themselves, who will be to thee more than all the wealth they have. We all know the skill of Suvala in play. This hill-king knoweth

many crooked methods in gambling. Let Sakuni return whence he came. War not, O Bharata, with the sons of Pandu.'

"Duryodhana said: 'O Kshatta, thou art always praising our enemies and running down the sons of Dhritharashtra. We know of whom thou art really fond. Thy tongue and mind betray thy heart. But the hostility thou showeth in speech is even greater than that which is in thy heart. Methinks we have been cherishing a viper on our laps. Like a cat thou wishest evil unto him that cherisheth thee. The wise have said that there is no sin graver than that of injuring one's master. How is it, O Kshatta, that thou dost not fear this sin? Insult us not. We know thy mind. Meddle not with the affairs of other men. Do not imagine that thou art our chief. We do not ask thee what is for our good. Cease, irritate not those that have already borne too much at thy hands. One should not give shelter to another who is the friend of his foes, or who is ever jealous of his protector or is evil-minded. Therefore, O Vidura, go whither-so-ever thou pleasest. A wife that is unchaste, however well-treated, yet forsaketh her husband.'

"Vidura, addressing Dhritharashtra, then said: 'O monarch, tell us dispassionately what thou thinkest of the conduct of those who thus forsake their men. The hearts of kings are, indeed, very fickle. Granting protection at first, they strike with clubs at last. Prince Duryodhana, thou regardest thyself as mature in intellect; and, thou of bad heart, thou regardest me as a child. But consider that he is a child who, having accepted one for a friend, subsequently findeth fault with him. Assuredly, advice is not agreeable to this bull of the Bharata race, even as a husband of sixty years is not to a damsel that is young. Hereafter, O king, if thou wishest to hear only words that are agreeable to thee, whether thy action be good or bad, ask thou women, idiots, cripples or similar persons. O great king, drink thou that which the honest drink and the dishonest shun—even humility, which is like a medicine that is bitter, pungent,

burning, unintoxicating and disagreeable. And drinking it regain thou thy sobriety. I always wish Dhritharashtra and his sons affluence and fame. Happen what may unto thee, here I bow to thee (and take my leave)."

THE MATCH CONTINUES

"Sakuni said: 'Thou hast, Yudhishtira, already lost much wealth. If thou hast still anything left tell us what it is.'

"Yudhishtira said: 'I know that I have untold wealth. I have innumerable kine, horses, and milch cows with calves and goats and sheep in the country extending from the Parnasa to the eastern bank of the Sindu. With this wealth I will play with thee.'

"Sakuni, ready with the dice, adopting unfair means, said unto Yudhishtira, 'Lo! I have won.'

"Yudhishtira said: 'I have, still remaining to me, my city, the country, land, the wealth of all dwelling therein except the Brahmanas, and all those persons themselves except Brahmanas. With this wealth, I will play with thee.'

"Vaisampayana said: "Hearing this, Sakuni, ready with the dice, adopting foul means, said unto Yudhishtira, 'Lo! I have won.'

"Yudhishtira said: 'This Nakula here, of mighty arms and leonine neck, of red eyes, and endued with youth, is now my one stake. Know that he is my wealth.'

"Sakuni cast the dice, and said unto Yudhishtira, 'Lo! He hath been won by us.'

"Yudhishtira said: 'This Sahadeva administereth justice. He hath also acquired a reputation for learning in this world. However undeserving he may be to be staked in play, with him as stake I will play.'

"Sakuni, ready with the dice, adopting foul means said unto Yudhishtira, 'Lo! I have won.'

"Sakuni continued: 'O king, the sons of Madri, dear unto thee, have both been won by me. It would seem, however, that Bhimasena and Dhananjaya are dearer to thee.'

“Yudhishtira said: ‘Wretch, thou actest sinfully in thus seeking to create disunion amongst us who are all of one mind.’

“Sakuni remarked: ‘Thou art, O king, our senior in age and possessest the highest accomplishments. I beg thy pardon and bow to thee. Thou knowest that gamesters, while excited with play utter ravings such as they never do in their waking moments nor even in dream.’

“Yudhishtira then said: ‘He that taketh us like a boat to the other shore of the sea of battle, he that is ever victorious over foes, the one hero in this world—with that Falguna as stake, however undeserving of being made so, I will now play with thee.’

“Hearing this, Sakuni, ready with the dice, adopting foul means exclaimed, ‘Look ! I have won !’ and said: ‘This foremost of all wielders of the bow hath now been won by me. Play now with the wealth that is still left unto thee, even with Bhima, thy dear brother, as thy stake, O son of Pandu.’

“Yudhishtira said: ‘O king, however, undeserving he may be of being made a stake, I will now play with thee by staking Bhimasena, that prince who is our leader, who is the foremost in battle—even like the wielder of the thunder-bolt, the one enemy of the Danavas—who hath no equal in might in the world.’

“Sakuni, ready with the dice, adopting foul means, said unto Yudhishtira, ‘Lo ! I have won !’

“Sakuni continued: ‘Thou hast, O son of Kunti, lost much wealth, horses and elephants as also thy brothers. Say if thou hast anything else yet remaining to thee.’

“Yudhishtira said: ‘I alone, the eldest and dear unto my brothers, remain. Won by thee, I shall be thy bondman.’

“And Sakuni casting the dice, adopting foul means, said unto Yudhishtira, ‘Lo ! I have won !’

“Sakuni continued: ‘Thou hast permitted thyself to be won when there is wealth still left to thee, O king ! This is very sinful.’

“Having said this, Sakuni proclaimed before all the kings present there of his having won, one after another, all the Pandavas. Then, addressing Yudhishtira, he said: ‘O king, there is one stake dear to thee that is still unwon. Pledge thou Krishna, the princess of Panchala, and by her win thyself back.’

“Yudhishtira said: ‘With Draupadi as stake, who is neither short nor tall, neither spare nor corpulent, and who is possessed of blue curly locks, I will now play with thee. With eyes like the leaves of the autumn lotus, and fragrant also as the autumn lotus, equal in beauty unto her (Lakshmi) who delighteth in autumn lotuses, and unto Sree herself in symmetry and every grace, she is such a woman as any man may desire for wife for gentleness, wealth of beauty and virtue. Retiring to bed last and waking up first, she looketh after all down to the cowherds and the shepherds. Making the slender-waisted Draupadi as my stake, I will play with thee.

“When Yudhishtira the just had spoken thus, there were shouts of ‘*Fie ! Fie !*’ from all the elders that were in the assembly. The whole conclave became agitated, and the kings who were present there all gave way to grief. Bhishma, Drona and Kripa were covered with perspiration. And Vidura, holding his head between his hands, sat like one that had lost his reason, with a downcast face giving away to his reflections and sighing like a snake. But Dhritharashtra, glad at heart, asked repeatedly, ‘Hath the stake been won?’ ‘Hath the stake been won?’, and could not conceal his emotions. Karna with Dussasana and others laughed aloud, while tears began to flow from the eyes of all the others present in the assembly. And the son of Suvala, proud of success and flushed with excitement, repeating, ‘Thou hast one stake dear to thee, etc.,’ exclaimed, ‘Look, I have won’ and (triumphantly) collected the dice that had been cast’.”

THE INSULT TO DRAUPADI

“Duryodhana said: ‘Come, Kshatta, bring hither Draupadi, the dear and beloved wife of the Pandavas. Let her be set to sweep the chambers and let the unfortunate one live with our serving-women.’

“Vidura said: ‘Dost thou not know, wretch, that, by uttering such harsh words, thou art binding thyself with cords? Dost thou not realise that thou art on the edge of a precipice? Dost thou not know that, like a deer, thou provokest so many tigers to rage? Snakes of deadly venom, provoked to ire, are on thy head! Wretch, do not further provoke them and go to the regions of Yama. In my judgment, Krishna does not become a slave, inasmuch as she was staked by the King after he had lost himself and ceased to be his own master. Like the bamboo that beareth fruit only when it is time for it to die, the son of Dhritharashtra winneth this treasure at play. O Duryodhana, swallow not the wealth of the Pandavas. Make them not thy enemies. Alas! the son of Dhritharashtra knoweth not that dishonesty is one of the frightful doors to hell. Alas! many of the Kurus with Dussasana amongst them have followed him in the path of dishonesty in the matter of this play at dice. Even gourds may sink and stones may float, but this foolish prince listeth not to my words that are even as regimen unto him. Without doubt, he will be the destruction of the Kurus.’

“Intoxicated with pride, the son of Dhritharashtra said: ‘Fie on Kshatta!’ and turning to the *Pratikamin* in attendance commanded him, ‘Go *Pratikamin*, and bring thou Draupadi hither. Thou needst have no fear from the sons of Pandu. It is Vidura alone that raveth in fear. Besides, he never wisheth for our prosperity.’

“Thus commanded, the *Pratikamin*, who was of the *Suta* caste, proceeded quickly, and entering the abode of the Pandavas, like a dog into a lion’s den, approached the queen of the sons of Pandu. And he said: ‘Yudhishthira

having been intoxicated with dice, O Draupadi, thou hast been won by Duryodhana. Come now, therefore, to the abode of Dhritharashtra. I will take thee, O Yajnaseni, and put thee to do some menial work.'

"Draupadi said: 'Why, *Pratikamin*, dost thou say so? What prince is there who playeth staking his wife? The king must certainly have been intoxicated with dice. Else, could he not have found any other object to stake?'

"The *Pratikamin* said: 'It was only when he had nothing else to stake that Ajatasatru staked thee. The king had first staked his brothers, then himself, and then thee, O princess.'

"Draupadi said: 'O son of the *Suta* race, go and ask that gambler whom he lost first, himself or me. Ascertain this, come hither and then take me with thee.'

"The messenger returning to the assembly communicated the words of Draupadi. And he spoke unto Yudhishthira, sitting in the midst of the kings, these words: 'Draupadi hath asked thee, 'Whose lord wert thou at the time thou lost me in play? Didst thou lose thyself first or me?' Yudhishthira, however, sat there like one deprived of reason and gave no answer to the *Suta*, good or ill.

"Duryodhana then said: 'Let the princess of Panchala come hither and put the question herself.'

"The messenger going back to the palace, himself much distressed, said unto Draupadi: 'O princess, they that are in the assembly are summoning thee. It seemeth that the end of the Kauravas is at hand.'

"Draupadi said: 'The great ordainer of the world hath, indeed, decreed so. Happiness and misery pay their court both to the wise and unwise. Dharma, however, it hath been said, is the one supreme object in the world. If cherished, that will verily confer blessings on us. Let not that Dharma now abandon the Kauravas. Going back to the assembly, repeat these my words. I am ready to do what those elderly and virtuous persons conversant with morality definitely tell me.'

Vaisampayana continued: "The *Suta* returned to the assembly and repeated the words of Draupadi. But all sat with downcast faces and uttered not a word, knowing the eagerness and resolution of Dhritharashtra's son.

"Yudhishtira, however, hearing of Duryodhana's intentions, sent a trusted messenger unto Draupadi directing that, although being unwell she was attired in one piece of cloth, she should appear before her father-in-law weeping bitterly. Looking at the Pandavas, Duryodhana, glad at heart, addressed the *Suta* and said: 'O *Pratikamin*, bring her hither. Let the Kauravas answer her question to her face.' Terrified at the (possible) wrath of the daughter of Drupada, the *Suta* once again asked in the assembly, 'What shall I say unto Krishna?'

"Duryodhana, hearing this, said: 'Dussasana, this son of my *Suta*, of little intelligence, feareth Vrikodara. Therefore, go thou thyself and forcibly bring hither the daughter of Yajnasena.' Hearing the command of his brother, prince Dussasana rose with bloodshot eyes and entering the abode of those great warriors spake unto the princess: 'Come, come, Krishna, princess of Panchala, thou hast been won by us. And, thou of eyes large as lotus leaves, come now and accept the Kurus for thy lords. Thou hast been fairly won; come to the assembly.' At these words, Draupadi, rising up in great distress, rubbed her pale face with her hands and ran to the apartments of the ladies of Dhritharashtra's household. But Dussasana, roaring in anger, ran after her and seized the queen by her locks, so long, blue and wavy. Alas! those locks that had been sprinkled with water sanctified with *mantras* in the great Rajasuya sacrifice were now forcibly seized by the son of Dhritharashtra no longer mindful of the prowess of the Pandavas. Dragging Krishna of long locks into the presence of the assembly,—as if she were helpless though having powerful protectors—and pulling at her, he made her tremble like a banana plant in a storm. And she faintly cried: 'Wretch! It ill behoveth thee to take me before the assembly. I am not well and I am clad

in one piece of attire.' But dragging her forcibly by her black locks while she was praying piteously unto Krishna and Jishnu, Dussasana said unto her: 'Whether thou art well or unwell, whether thou hast one cloth or no cloth at all, when thou hast been won at dice and become our slave thou art to live amongst our serving-women.'

"With hair dishevelled and half her dress loosened, the modest Krishna burning with anger feebly said: 'In this assembly are persons versed in all the branches of learning; devoted to the performance of sacrifices and other rites, and all equal unto Indra; persons some of whom are really my elders and others who deserve to be honoured as such. How can I appear before them in this state? O wretch! O thou of cruel deeds, drag me not so! Uncover me not so. The princes (my lords) will not pardon thee, even if thou hast the gods themselves with Indra as thy allies. The illustrious son of Dharma never swerves from the path of morality. I am therefore loth, even by a word, to admit an atom of fault in my lord unmindful of his virtues. Thou draggest me before these Kuru heroes. This is truly an unworthy act. But no one here rebuketh thee! Assuredly, all these are of the same mind as thee. O fie! gone is the righteous glory of the Bharata race! Verily hath also the duty of those acquainted with the Kshatriya practice been forgotten. Else, the Kurus in this assembly would never have looked silently on this act that transgresseth the limits of their code of conduct. Oh! it seems both Drona and Bhishma have lost their might; so also hath the high-souled Kshatta and this king. Else, why do these foremost of the Kuru elders look mutely on this great outrage?'

Vaisampayana continued: "Thus did Krishna of slender waist cry in agony in that assembly. And casting a glance at her enraged lords who were filled with terrible wrath, she inflamed them further with that pleading look of hers. They felt distressed not so much at having been robbed of their kingdom and their wealth as with that glance of Krishna full of modesty and anger. Beholding Krishna looking at

her helpless lords, Dussasana dragged her still more forcibly and called her, 'Slave ! 'Slave !' and laughed aloud. At those words Karna looked very pleased and approved of them by laughing aloud. And Sakuni, the son of Suvala the Gandhara king, similarly applauded Dussasana. Excepting these three and Duryodhana, every one was filled with sorrow at seeing Krishna thus dragged before them. And beholding it all, Bhishma said: 'O blessed one, morality is subtle. I find myself unable duly to decide this point that thou hast put; for, one who is not a master is not competent to stake the wealth belonging to others; at the same time, a woman is always considered subordinate to her husband. The son of Pandu hath said: 'I am won !' Sakuni hath not his equal among men at dice. Yet the son of Kunti voluntarily staked with him. The illustrious Yudhishtira doth not himself regard that Sakuni hath deceived him. Therefore, I cannot decide this point.'

'Draupadi said: 'The king had been summoned to this assembly and, though possessing no skill at dice, was made to play with skilful, wicked, deceitful and desperate gamblers. How can he be said then to have staked voluntarily? The scion of the Kurus and chief of the Pandavas was duped by wretches of deceitful conduct and unholy instincts acting together, and then vanquished. He could not understand their tricks, but he hath now done so. Here, in this assembly, are Kurus who have sons and daughters-in-law. Let them all, reflecting well upon my words, duly decide the point that I have put.'

Vaisampayana continued: 'Unto Krishna who was thus weeping and crying piteously, looking occasionally at her helpless lords, Dussasana spake many disagreeable and harsh words. Vrikodara, grieved beyond endurance and looking intently at Yudhishtira, gave way to wrath.'

'Bhima said: 'O Yudhishtira, gamblers have in their houses many women of loose character. They do not yet stake those women out of kindness even for them. Whatever wealth the King of Kasi gave, whatever gems, animals, wealth,

coats of mail and weapons other kings of the earth gave, our kingdom, thyself and ourselves, have all been won by our foes. At all this my wrath was not excited, for thou art our lord. This, however, I regard as a highly improper act—this act of staking Draupadi. This innocent girl deserveth not this treatment. Having obtained the (mighty) Pandavas as her lords, she yet suffereth, because of thee, pers cution at the hands of the low, despicable, cruel, and mean-minded Kauravas. It is on her account, O king, that my anger falleth on thee. I shall burn those offending hands of thine. Sahadeva, bring some fire.'

"Arjuna hearing this said: 'Thou hast never before, Bhimasena, uttered such words as these. Assuredly, thy high sense of duty hath been upset by these cruel foes. Thou shouldst not play into their hands. The king was summoned by the foe and, according to the practice of the Kshatriyas, he duly played much against his will.'

"Bhima said: 'If it were not, Dhananjaya, that the king had acted according to Kshatriya traditions I would have, taking his hands together by sheer force, burnt them in a blazing fire.'

"Beholding the Pandavas thus distressed and the princess of Panchala also thus afflicted, Vikarna the son of Dhritharashtra said: 'Ye kings, answer ye the question that hath been asked by Yajnaseni. Bhishma and Dhritharashtra, the oldest of the Kurus, as also the high-souled Vidura, do not say anything. The son of Bharadwaja who is our preceptor, as also Kripa, is here. Why do not these best of regenerate ones answer the question? Let also those other kings assembled here answer this question according to their judgment, setting aside all passion and motives of gain. Thus did Vikarna repeatedly appeal to the assembly. But those kings answered not one word, good or ill. At last the prince said: 'Ye kings of the earth, ye Kauravas, whether ye answer this question or not, I will say what I regard as just and proper in this matter. It hath been said that hunting, drinking, gambling and women are the four vices of kings.

And people do not regard the acts done by a person who is thus improperly engaged as of any validity. This son of Pandu, while absorbed in one of these vicious pursuits into which he was enticed by deceitful gamblers, made Draupadi a stake. The innocent Draupadi is, besides, the common wife of all the sons of Pandu. Again, the king had lost himself (his freedom) before he offered her as a stake. And it was Suvala who suggested and indeed prevailed upon the king to pledge this Krishna. In view of all these circumstances, I regard Draupadi as not won.'

'At this speech of Vikarna there was a loud applause from those present in the assembly, and they all condemned the son of Suvala. But the son of Radha, angry and excited, waving his well-shaped arms, spoke thus: 'Vikarna, these personages here, though urged by Draupadi, have not uttered a word. They all regard the daughter of Drupada to have been properly won. Thou alone, being an immature stripling, art bursting with wrath. Thou dost not know what morality truly is, for thou sayest like a fool that this Krishna who hath been (justly) won as not won at all. Why dost thou regard Krishna as not won, when the eldest of the Pandavas staked all his possessions before this assembly? And Draupadi is included in his possessions. It is true that Draupadi was mentioned by Suvala as a wager, but it was approved by the Pandavas. Or, if thou thinkest that it was improper to bring her hither attired in a single piece of cloth listen to certain sound reasons I will give. O son of the Kuru race, the gods have ordained only one husband for a woman. But this Draupadi hath many husbands. Therefore, certain it is that she is an unchaste woman. To bring her, therefore, into this assembly, attired though she be in one piece of cloth; even to uncover her is not at all an act that should cause surprise. Dussasana, this Vikarna speaking words of apparent wisdom is but a boy. Take off the robes of the Pandavas as also the attire of Draupadi.' Hearing these words the Pandavas took their upper garments off and flung them down. Then Dussasana, O king, forcibly

seizing Draupadi's attire before the eyes of all, began to pull it off.

Vaisampayana continued: "When the attire of Draupadi was being thus pulled off she thought of the Lord. 'O Govinda ! O thou who dwellest in Dwaraka ! O Krishna ! O Kesava ! Seest thou not that the Kauravas are humiliating me ! O Lord, O husband of Lakshmi ! O destroyer of all afflictions ! O Janardhana ! Rescue me who am sinking in the Kaurava ocean ! O Krishna ! O Krishna ! O thou great *yogin* ! Thou soul of the universe ! Thou creator of all things ! Save me who am distressed.' Thus did the persecuted Draupadi, resplendent still in her beauty, covering her face cry aloud, thinking of Krishna, of Hari, of the Lord of the three worlds. Hearing the prayer of Draupadi, the Lord was deeply moved and gave her succour, covering her with clothes of many hues. And, O monarch, as the attire of Draupadi was being pulled off, no sooner was one taken off than another of the same kind appeared to be covering her. And O exalted one, by the grace of the protector of the good, hundreds upon hundreds of robes of many hues thus came off Draupadi's person. There were loud acclamations of astonished relief from many voices and the monarchs present in the assembly beholding that wonder of wonders applauded Draupadi and rebuked the son of Dhritharashtra. Then, in a loud voice, with lips quivering in rage, Bhima giving vent to his feelings swore a terrible oath.

"Hear these words of mine, ye Kshatriyas of the world," he said, "words such as these were never before uttered by other men, nor will any ever utter them in future. Ye lords of earth, tearing open in battle, by sheer force, the breast of this wretch, this wicked-minded villain of the Bharata race, if I do not drink his life blood, let me not go to the heavenly abode of my ancestors."

"And all the honest men in the assembly began to murmur 'Alas ! the Kauravas answer not the question put to them by Draupadi', and they all loudly condemned Dhritharashtra. Then Vidura, waving his hands and silencing every one,

spake these words: 'Ye that are in this assembly, Draupadi having put her question is weeping helplessly. Ye are not answering her. Virtue and morality are being persecuted by such conduct. They that are in the assembly, should, unmoved by interest and anger, answer the question. Ye kings, Vikarna hath answered the question, according to his own knowledge and judgment. Ye should also answer it as ye think proper. Knowing the rules of morality he that doth not answer a query that is put to him in an assembly incurreth half the penalty that attacheth to a lie. He, on the other hand, who, knowing the rules of morality and being in an assembly, answereth falsely, assuredly incurreth the sin of lying.'

Vaisampayana continued: "The kings that were there yet answered not a word. But Karna spoke unto Dussasana, telling him, 'Take away this serving-woman Krishna into the inner apartments. And thereupon Dussasana began to drag the helpless and modest Draupadi, trembling and crying piteously unto the Pandavas her lords.

"Draupadi said: Wait a little, thou worst of men, thou wicked-minded Dussasana! I have a duty to perform—an important one that hath not been performed by me yet. Dragged forcibly by this wretch's strong arms, I stood deprived of my senses. I now salute these reverend seniors in this assembly of the Kurus. That I could not do so before cannot be my fault.'

Vaisampayana said: "Pulled with greater force than before, helpless and heart-stricken, Draupadi, falling down upon the ground, kept wailing thus in that assembly of the Kurus:

"Alas! Beheld once before, on the occasion of the Swayamvara, by the assembled kings in the amphitheatre, and never even once afterwards, I am to-day brought before this assembly. She who had never before been seen in her palace even by the winds and the sun is to-day before this assembly and exposed to the gaze of the crowd. Alas! she whom the sons of Pandu would not, while in her palace,

suffer to be touched even by the wind, is to-day suffered by them to be seized and dragged by this wretch. Alas ! these Kauravas also allow their daughter-in-law, so unworthy of such treatment, to be thus humbled before them. It seemeth that the times are out of joint. What can be more distressing than that, though high-born and chaste, I should yet be forced to enter this public court ? Where has that virtue gone for which these kings were noted ? It hath been heard that the kings of ancient times never brought their wedded wives into the public court. Alas ! that eternal usage hath disappeared from among the Kauravas. Else, how is it that the chaste wife of the Pandavas, the sister of Prishata's son and the friend of Vasudeva, is brought before this assembly ? Ye Kauravas, I am the wedded wife of king Yudhishtira the just, born of royalty like the King himself. Tell me now if I am a serving-maid or otherwise. I will cheerfully accept your answer. Ye kings, I desire ye to answer whether ye regard me as won or not won. I will accept your answer whatever it be.'

"Hearing these words, Bhishma answered, 'I have already said, blessed one, that the course of morality is subtle. Even the illustrious wise in this world fail to understand it always. What in this world a strong man deemeth morality, that others also regard as such, otherwise though it may really be; while what a weak man deemeth morality is scarcely regarded as such even if it be truly the highest morality. From the importance of the issue involved, from its intricacy and subtlety, I am unable to answer with certitude the question thou hast asked. It seemeth to me, however, that Yudhishtira is an authority on this question. It behoveth him to declare whether thou art won or not won.'

Vaisampayana said: "The kings present there, from fear of Duryodhana, uttered not a word, good or ill, although they beheld Draupadi crying heart-broken like a female osprey and repeatedly appealing to them. Beholding them all remaining silent, Duryodhana smiling a little addressed the daughter of the king of Panchala and said: 'Yajnaseni,

the question thou hast put dependeth on thy husbands—on Bhima of mighty strength, on Arjuna, on Nakula, on Sahadeva. Let them answer thy question. O Panchali, let them for thy sake declare, in the midst of these respectable men, Yudhishtira to be not their lord; let them thereby make king Yudhishtira the just a liar; and thou shalt then be freed from the condition of slavery. Let the illustrious son of Dharma, always wedded to virtue, himself declare whether he is or is not thy lord. At his words, accept thou the Pandavas or ourselves without delay.'

"And the kings, with averted faces, looked at Yudhishtira, curious to hear what he would say, what Bibatsu, never defeated in battle, Bhimasena and the twins also would say. And when that busy hum of many voices became still, Bhimasena, waving his strong and well-formed arms smeared with sandal-paste, spake these words: 'If this high-souled king Yudhishtira the just who is our eldest brother had not been our lord, we would never have forgiven the Kuru race for all this. If he regardeth himself as won, we too have all been won. If this were not so, is there any mortal that would escape from me with life, after having touched the locks of the princess of Panchala? Bound by Dharma and the reverence due to our eldest brother, and pressed by Arjuna to remain quiet, I am refraining from doing anything terrible. If, however, I am once permitted by king Yudhishtira, I would slay these wretched sons of Dhritharashtra, making slaps do the work of swords, like a lion slaying a number of little animals.'

"Then Karna said to Draupadi: 'Thou art the wife of a slave incapable of possessing anything on his own account. Repair now to the inner apartments of king Dhritharashtra and serve the king's relatives. We direct that that is now thy proper duty. And, princess, all the sons of Dhritharashtra and not the sons of Pritha are now thy masters. O handsome one, select thou another husband now—one who will not make thee a slave by gambling.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Duryodhana, addressing Yudhishtira who was silent and distraught, said: 'O king, answer thou the question that hath been put by Draupadi. Say whether thou regardest Krishna as not won.' And having spoken thus unto the son of Kunti, Duryodhana, with the object of encouraging the son of Radha and insulting Bhima, made gestures to Draupadi to sit on his left thigh. Beholding this, Bhimasena, in blazing wrath, emitting fire even like a burning tree from every crack and orifice of which red flames leap, said sternly unto Duryodhana in the midst of all those kings, 'Let not Vrikodara reach the blissful region where his ancestors abide if he doth not break that thigh of thine in the great conflict that is in store.'

"Vidura then addressed: 'Ye kings of Pratipa's race, know ye for certain that this great calamity that threateneth to overtake the Bharatas hath been sent by Destiny itself. The sons of Dhritharashtra have, indeed, been gambling regardless of all proprieties in the matter. The prosperity of your kingdom is at an end. Alas ! the Kauravas are even now engaged in sinful consultations. If virtue is persecuted the whole assembly becometh polluted. I repeat that, if Yudhishtira had staked Draupadi before he was himself won, he would certainly have been regarded as her master. If, however, a person staketh anything at a time when he himself is incapable of holding any wealth, to win it is very like obtaining wealth in a dream.'

"Duryodhana, hearing Vidura thus speak, said: 'I am willing to abide by the words of Bhima, of Arjuna and of the twins. Let them say that Yudhishtira is not their master. Yajnaseni will then be freed from her bondage.'

"Arjuna, at this, said: 'This illustrious son of Kunti, king Yudhishtira the just, was certainly our master before he began to play. But having lost himself, let all the Kauravas judge for themselves whose master he could be after that'."

DHRITHARASHTRA ASSERTS HIMSELF

Vaisampayana continued: "Just at that moment, a jackal began to shriek in the *homa*-chamber of King Dhritharashtra's palace; and asses began to bray responsively. And terrible birds, from all sides, began to answer with their cries. Bhishma, Drona and the learned Gautama loudly repeated, *Swasthi! Swasthi!* Greatly alarmed at beholding the frightful omens, Gandhari and Vidura appealed to Dhritharashtra who thereupon said:

"Thou wicked-minded Duryodhana! thou wretch! Destruction hath already overtaken thee when thou insultest in language such as this the wife of these bulls among the Kurus."

Anxious to save his relatives and friends from destruction, the wise Dhritharashtra began to console the princess of Panchala and, addressing her, he said: 'Ask of me any boon, O princess of Panchala, that thou desirest. Chaste and virtuous, thou art the first of all my daughters-in-law.'

"Draupadi said: 'O bull of the Bharata race, if thou wilt grant me a boon, I ask that the respected and ever righteous Yudhishtira be freed from slavery. Let not unthinking children call my child Prativindhya, born of royalty, the son of a slave.'

"Dhritharashtra said unto her: 'Auspicious one, let it be as thou sayest. Name thou another boon. My heart inclineth to give thee a second boon. Thou art deserving of more than one boon.'

"Draupadi said: 'I ask that Bhimasena, Dhananjaya and the twins, with their chariots and bows, regain their liberty.'

"Dhritharashtra said: 'Blessed daughter, be it as thou desirest. Ask thou a third boon, for thou hast not been sufficiently honoured with two boons. Virtuous in thy behaviour, thou art the foremost of all my daughters-in-law.'

"Draupadi said: 'O best of kings, greed maketh for the destruction of righteousness. I do not deserve a third boon.'

Therefore I dare not ask any. It hath been said that a Vaisya may ask one boon; a Kshatriya woman, two boons; a Kshatriya male, three; and a Brahmana, a hundred ! O king, these my husbands, freed from the wretched state of bondage, will be able to achieve prosperity by their own honest efforts.'

'Learning of Dhritharashtra's decision, Karna said: 'We have never heard of such an act (as this one of Draupadi) performed by any of the women noted in this world for their beauty ! When the sons of both Pandu and Dhritharashtra were excited with wrath, this Draupadi became unto the sons of Pandu the means of salvation. Indeed, the princess of Panchala, serving as a boat unto the sons of Pandu who were sinking in an ocean of distress, hath brought them in safety to the shore.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Kindled by these taunts of Karna spoken before all the Kurus, namely, that the sons of Pandu were saved by their wife, Bhimasena said: 'Shall I, O king, slay, without loss of time, all these foes assembled together, even here, or shall I destroy them, O Bharata, by the roots, outside this palace ? Or, what need is there of words or of command ? I shall slay all these even now, and rule thou the whole earth without a rival.' Yudhishtira checked the mighty hero, and embracing him said to him 'No. Be quiet and peaceful'. And having pacified the mighty-armed one, Yudhishtira approached Dhritharashtra with hands joined in entreaty and said: 'O king, thou art our master. What are your commands to us ?'

"Dhritharashtra replied: 'Ajatasatru, blest be thou. Go thou in peace and safety, rule thy own kingdom with thy wealth. Gifted with great wisdom, thou art yet so humble and thou waitest also upon the old. Where there is intelligence, there is forbearance. Therefore, O Bharata, follow thou counsels of peace; the axe falleth upon wood and not upon stone. (Thou art open to advice, not Duryodhana.) They are the best of men that remember not the evil deeps of their

foes; that behold only the merits, not the faults, of their enemies. O child, remember not the callous conduct of Duryodhana. Think of thy mother Gandhari and myself, if thou desirest to remember only what is good. Think of me—thy father, old and blind and still alive. It was for seeing our friends and testing the strength and weakness of my children that, from motives of policy, I suffered this match at dice to proceed. In thee is virtue, in Arjuna patience, in Bhimasena prowess, and in the twins unalloyed reverence for superiors. Blest be thou, Ajatasatru. Return to Khandavaprastha, and let there be brotherly amity between thee and thy cousins’.”

THE INEXORABLE FATE

Janamejaya asked: “How did the sons of Dhritharashtra feel when they came to know that the Pandavas had, with Dhritharashtra’s leave, left Hastinapura with all their wealth?”

Vaisampayana said: “O king, learning that the Pandavas had been commanded by the wise Dhritharashtra to return to their capital, Dussasana went at once to his brother and said: ‘Ye mighty warriors, what we had won after so much trouble, the old man hath thrown away. Know ye that he hath returned the whole of that wealth to the foe.’ Hearing this Duryodhana, Karna and Sakuni, acting in concert with the object of counteracting the sons of Pandu, immediately approached the wise King Dhritharashtra and spake unto him these artful words.

“Duryodhana said: ‘After one hath placed on one’s neck and back snakes filled with venom, provoked to ire and bent on one’s destruction, is it possible for him to take them off? Equipped with weapons and mounting their chariots the angry sons of Pandu like wrathful and venomous snakes will assuredly annihilate us, O father. Even now Arjuna proceedeth, encased in mail, frequently taking up the Gandiva, breathing hard and casting angry glances

around. We have also heard that Vrikodara is proceeding along in his car frequently whirling his heavy mace. Nakula has the sword in his grasp and the semi-circular shield in his hand. And Sahadeva and Yudhishtira have shown signs clearly testifying to their intentions. Riding in their cars fully armed, they are whipping their horses in order to reach Khandava soon and gather their forces. Who is there among them that will forgive the insult to Draupadi? We must therefore again gamble with the son of Pandu for sending them all into exile. Only thus can we bring them under our control. Dressed in skins, either we or they, defeated at dice, shall repair to the woods for twelve years. The thirteenth year shall have to be spent *incognito* in some inhabited country; and, if recognised, an exile for another twelve years shall follow. Either we or they shall live so. Casting the dice, let the sons of Pandu once more play. O king, even this is now our imperative duty. And this Sakuni of ours knoweth well the whole science of dice. If they succeed in observing this vow for thirteen years we shall, in the meantime, have been firmly rooted in the kingdom and, having made alliances, we shall assemble a vast invincible host and defeat the sons of Pandu should they reappear. Let this course recommend itself to thee.'

'Dhritharashtra said: 'Bring back the Pandavas then, indeed, even if they have gone a long way. Let them come and once again cast the dice.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Then Drona, Somadatta, Valhika, Gautama, Vidura, the son of Drona, Bhurisravas and the mighty son of Dhritharashtra by his Vaisya wife, Bhishma, and that mighty warrior Vikarna, all begged: 'Let not the play begin again. Let there be peace.'

"O monarch, the virtuous Gandhari also appealing to King Dhritharashtra said: 'When Duryodhana was born, Vidura of great intelligence had said, 'It is well to send this disgrace to our race to the other world. It is certain he will prove the destruction of our race.' Take this warning to heart, O king of the Kurus. Sink not, through thy own fault, in

an ocean of calamity. O lord, accord not thy approbation to the counsels of the wicked ones of immature years. Be not thou the cause of the terrible destruction of this race. Would anyone break an embankment which hath been completed, or re-kindle a conflagration which hath been extinguished? Why provoke the peaceful sons of Pritha? Thou knoweth everything, but still I shall call thy attention to this: The scriptures have no hold over the conduct of the wicked-minded. Therefore, O king, abandon this wretch of our race. Thou couldst not, from parental affection, do so before. Know that the time hath come for the destruction of our race through him. Err not, O king! Let thy mind, guided by counsels of peace, virtue, and right policy, be its natural self. Prosperity which is ill got soon perisheth; while that which is won by fair means taketh root and passeth from generation to generation.'

"So spake Gandhari pointing out to him, in strong language, the path of virtue. But Dhritharashtra replied unto her, saying: 'If the destruction of our race is at hand, let it take its course. I am ill able to prevent it. Let it be as these my sons desire. Let the Pandavas return. And let my sons again gamble with the sons of Pandu.'

"Agreeably to the command of Dhritharashtra, the royal messenger, overtaking Yudhishtira who had by that time gone a long way, spoke to the monarch: 'Even these are the words of thy father, Bharata, spoken unto thee, 'The assembly is ready. O son of Pandu, O king Yudhishtira, come and cast the dice.'

"Yudhishtira said: 'One obtains fruits, good and bad, in accordance with the decree of the Ordainer of the creation. If play I must, the consequences must be taken. This is a challenge to dice; it is, besides, the command of the old king. Although I know that it will prove destructive to me, yet I cannot as a Kshatriya refuse.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Although a living animal made of gold was an impossibility, yet Rama suffered himself to be tempted by a golden deer. Indeed, the minds of

men over whom calamities hang become deranged. Yudhishtira, therefore, retraced his steps along with his brothers; and knowing full well the deception practised by Sakuni, the son of Pritha nevertheless returned to play at dice with him again. These mighty warriors entered that assembly once more, to the utter dismay of all their friends.

“Sakuni then said: ‘The old king hath given ye back all your wealth. That is good. But, O bull of the Bharata race, listen to me, there is a big stake. Defeated by ye at dice, we shall enter the great forest dressed in deer-skins and live there for twelve years, passing the whole of the thirteenth year in some inhabited region unrecognised; and if recognised return to an exile of another twelve years. Or, vanquished by us, ye shall, with Draupadi, live similarly for twelve years in the woods, passing the whole of the thirteenth year unrecognised in some inhabited region; and recognised, an exile of another twelve years will follow. On the expiry of the thirteenth year, each will get back his kingdom. With this resolution let us play.’

“At these words, those assembled, raising up their hands, said in great anxiety and with vehemence ‘Alas, fie on the friends of Duryodhana that they do not apprise him of his great danger ! Whether he, O bull among the Bharatas (Dhr̥tharashtra), understandeth himself or not, it is thy duty to warn him.’

“And Yudhishtira said: ‘How can, O Sakuni, a king like me, who always observes the traditions of his own order, refuse when summoned to dice ? I will play with thee.’

“Sakuni then took up the dice and casting them he said unto Yudhishtira: ‘Lo, I have won’ !”

THE BANISHMENT

Vaisampayana said: “Then the vanquished sons of Pritha got ready for their exile into the woods. Casting off their royal robes, they attired themselves in deer-skins. And beholding them, Dussasana exclaimed: ‘The absolute

sovereignty of the illustrious King Duryodhana hath at last commenced. The sons of Pritha have all been plunged by us into everlasting hell. They have been deprived of happiness and kingdom for ever and ever. They who, proud of their wealth, laughed in derision at the son of Dhritharashtra will now have to go into the woods, defeated and deprived by us of all their wealth. The wise Yajnasena of the Somaka race, in bestowing his daughter on the sons of Pandu, acted most unfortunately; for the husbands of Yajnaseni—these sons of Pritha—are now like unto eunuchs. And, O Yajnaseni, what joy will be thine in the woods with these thy husbands dressed in skins and thread-bare rags, deprived of their wealth and possessions. Elect thou a husband, whomsoever thou likest, from among those present here. Why shouldst thou any longer wait upon the fallen sons of Pandu ?

“Thus did Dussasana utter, in the hearing of the Pandavas, harsh words of most cruel import. And hearing them, the unbearing Bhima, suddenly approaching that prince, like a Himalayan lion bounding upon a jackal, rebuked him loudly in these words, ‘Wicked-minded villain, ravest thou so in words that are uttered only by the sinful ? As thou piercest our hearts here with these thy sharp words, so shall I pierce thy heart in battle, calling all this to thy mind.’

Vaisampayana continued: “As the Pandavas were leaving the assembly, the wicked Duryodhana, gloating over his success, mimicked the playful leonine tread of Bhima. Vrikodara, half turning towards him, said: ‘Think not, fool, that by exiling us thou hast achieved thy object. Slay thee I soon shall with all thy followers and answer thee, recalling all this to thy mind.’ While going out of the Kaurava court he repeated: ‘I will slay this wretched Suyodhana in battle with my mace, and prostrating him on the ground I will place my foot on his head. As for this other wicked person—Dussasana, insolent of speech—I will drink his blood like a lion.’

“And Arjuna said: ‘On the fourteenth year from this day, they shall see what happeneth. Arjuna voweth that he

will slay, in battle, with his arrows this Karna with all his followers. Indeed, as well expect ye the mountains of Himavat to move, the maker of the day to lose his radiance, and the moon its coolness, as expect that this vow of mine will ever fail to be kept. And this shall surely come to pass if, on the fourteenth year from now, Duryodhana doth not duly return us our kingdom.'

'After Arjuna had said this, the handsome son of Madri, Sahadeva, waving his mighty arms and sighing like a snake, exclaimed, with eyes red with anger: 'Thou disgrace of the Gandhara kings, what thou takest for dice are verily sharp-pointed arrows which are going to pierce thee in battle. I shall assuredly slay thee with all thy followers soon enough, if thou facest me in battle pursuant to the Kshatriya usage.'

'Then, Nakula spake: 'I shall certainly send unto the regions of Yama all those wicked sons of Dhritrashtra who have used at the gambling match harsh and insulting words towards this daughter of Yajnasena.'

'Having thus pledged themselves, they approached king Dhritrashtra.'

'Yudhishtira said: 'I bid farewell unto all the Bharatas, unto my old grand-sire (Bhishma), King Somadatta, the great King Vahlika, Drona, Kripa, all the other kings, Aswatthaman, Vidura, Dhritrashtra, all the sons of Dritharashtra, Yuyutsu, Sanjaya, and all the courtiers. I bid ye all farewell, and returning again I shall see you.'

'Overcome with shame, none of them could say anything. In their inmost hearts, however, they prayed for the welfare of that intelligent prince.

'Vidura then said: 'The reverend Pritha is a princess by birth. It behoveth her not to go into the woods. Delicate, aged and ever used to comfort, the blessed one will live, respected by me, in my abode. May God always protect you.'

'The Pandavas thereupon said: 'O sinless one, let it be as thou sayest. Thou art our uncle and, therefore, as a father unto us. Thou art our most respected elder. We shall always obey what thou choosest to command.'

“Vidura replied: ‘Yudhishtira, one that is vanquished by sinful means need not be pained at such defeat. Thou knowest every rule of morality; Dhananjaya is ever-victorious in battle; Bhimasena is the slayer of foes; Nakula is the gatherer of wealth; Sahadeva hath administrative talents; Dhaumya is the foremost of all conversant with the *Vedas*; and the well-behaved Draupadi is virtuous and prudent. Ye are all attached to one another; enemies cannot separate you from one another and ye are contented. Therefore, who is there that will not envy ye? O Bharata, this samadhi (patient abstraction from earthly possessions) will be of great benefit to thee. Formerly, thou wert instructed on the mountains of Himavat by Meru Savarni; in the town of Varanavata by Krishna Dwaipayana; on the cliff of Bhrgu by Rama; and on the banks of the Dhrishadwati by Sambhu himself. Narada and thy priest Dhaumya will now be thy instructors. O son of Pandu, thou surpassest in intelligence even Pururavas, the son of Ila; in strength, all other monarchs; and in virtue, even the *Rishis*. Therefore, resolve thou earnestly to win victory even like Indra; to control thy wrath like Yama; to be liberal like Kubera; and to control thy passions like Varuna. And, O Bharata, be thou charming like the moon, sustaining like water; patient like the Earth; radiant like the entire solar disc; and strong like the winds. Welfare and immunity from ailment be thine; and, Yudhishtira, bear yourself well at all times,—in those of distress, in those of difficulty,—indeed, in respect of everything. We hope to see thee, return safely crowned with success.’

Vaisampayana said: ‘Before departing, Draupadi went unto the illustrious Pritha and solicited her leave. And Kunti, deeply affected upon beholding Draupadi, uttered these words in a voice choked with grief:

‘O child, grieve not that this great calamity hath overtaken thee. Thou art well conversant with the duties of the female sex, and it behoveth me not to instruct thee as to thy duties towards thy lords. Thou art chaste and

accomplished, and thy qualities have adorned the race of thy birth as also the race into which thou hast been admitted by marriage. Fortunate, indeed, are the Kauravas that they have not been burnt by thy wrath. O child, safely go thou blest by my prayers. Good women never suffer their hearts to be stricken over what is inevitable. Soon shalt thou obtain good fortune. Keep thy eye ever on my child Sahadeva. See that his heart sinketh not under this great calamity.'

'The princess Draupadi, bathed in tears, clad in one piece of cloth stained with blood and with hair dishevelled left her mother-in-law. As she went away weeping and wailing, Pritha, herself in grief, followed her. She had not gone far when she met her sons shorn of their ornaments and robes, clad in deer-skins, and their heads bowed with shame, surrounded by rejoicing foes and pitied by friends. Approaching her sons Kunti embraced them all and in accents choked with anguish said these words:

'Ye are all high-minded and engaged in the service of your superiors. And ye are also devoted to the gods and the performance of sacrifices. Why, then, hath this calamity overtaken you? Whence these reverses of fortune? Alas, I brought you forth. All this must be due to my misfortune; and it is for this that ye have been visited by this calamity, though ye are all endued with great virtue. How shall ye now, bereft of your wealth and possessions, live in poverty in the pathless woods? If I had known before that ye were destined to live in the woods, I would not have, on Pandu's death, come from the mountains of Satasingra to Hastinapura. Fortunate was your father, as I now see, for he truly reaped the fruit of his asceticism and was spared the pain of seeing the misfortune of his sons. Fortunate also was the virtuous Madri who had, it seems, a foreknowledge of what would happen and who obtained the high path of emancipation and every blessing therewith. Oh! Fie on my longing to live, owing to which I suffer all this woe. Ye children, ye are all good and dear unto me.

I bare you after much suffering. I cannot leave you. Even I will go with you. O Draupadi, why dost thou leave me alone? Hath *Dhata* himself forgotten to ordain my death? O Krishna, O thou who dwellest in Dwaraka, O younger brother of Sankarshana, where art thou? Why dost thou not deliver me and these best of men also from such woe? They say that thou who art without beginning and without end givest succour to those that think of thee. Why hath this become untrue? These my sons are devoted to virtue, ever noble, reputed and brave. They deserve not to suffer affliction. Oh! show them mercy. Alas! When there are such elders amongst our race as Bhishma, Drona and Kripa, all men of wisdom, how could such a calamity at all happen? O Pandu! O king! Where art thou? Why sufferest thou quietly thy good children to be thus sent into exile? O Sahadeva, thou art my dearest child, dearer, O son of Madri, than my body itself. Forsake me not. It behoveth thee to take some pity on me. Bound in honour as they are, let these thy brothers go. But earn thou that merit which springeth from waiting upon me.'

'The Pandavas then consoled their weeping mother and with heavy hearts set out for the woods. And Vidura, consoling the sorrowing Kunti, led her slowly to his house. And the ladies of the royal household, hearing everything as it happened,—the exile (of the Pandavas) and the dragging of Krishna into the assembly—wept loudly, censuring the Kauravas. They sat silent for a long time, covering their lotus-like faces with their fair hands. King Dhritharashtra also, thinking of the dangers that threatened his sons, became a prey to anxiety and he sent a messenger unto Vidura, saying, 'Let Kshatta come to me without a moment's delay'.

'As soon as Vidura came, Dhritharashtra timidly asked his brother: 'What exactly was the manner in which Yudhishtira departed from Hastinapura? And how about Bhimasena and Arjuna? How did the twin sons of Madri leave? And how, Kshatta, did Dhaumya go? And how the illustrious Draupadi? Tell me everything in detail.'

“Vidura replied: ‘Yudhishtira went away covering his face with his cloth; and Bhima, O king, hath gone away looking at his own mighty arms; Jishnu (Arjuna) hath followed the king spreading sand-grains around; Sahadeva hath gone away besmearing his face; and Nakula, the handsomest of men, hath gone away staining himself with dust. And the large-eyed and beautiful Krishna left covering her face with her dishevelled hair and weeping. And O monarch, Dhaumya goeth along the road with *kusa* grass in hand, uttering the awful *mantras* of the *Sama Veda* that relate to *Yama*.’

“Dhritharashtra asked: ‘Tell me, O Vidura, why it is that the Pandavas are leaving Hastinapura in such varied guise.’

“Vidura answered: ‘Though persecuted by thy sons and robbed of his kingdom and wealth, Yudhishtira the just hath not yet deviated from the path of virtue. King Yudhishtira is always kind to thy children. Deprived (of his kingdom and possessions) by foul means, filled with wrath as he is, he doth not open his eyes. He thinks: ‘I should not burn the people by looking at them with angry eyes;’ and so the royal son of Pandu goeth covering his face. And, proud of the strength of his arms, Vrikodara goeth exhibiting them and desiring to do unto his enemies deeds worthy of those arms. And Arjuna followeth the footsteps of Yudhishtira scattering sand-grains emblematical of the arrows he would shower in battle. And Sahadeva goeth besmearing his face wishing ‘None may recognise me in this day of trouble.’ And, O exalted one, Nakula goeth staining himself with dust thinking, ‘Lest otherwise I steal the hearts of the ladies that may look at me.’ And Draupadi goeth, attired in one piece of stained cloth, her hair dishevelled, and weeping, signifying, ‘The wives of those for whom I have been reduced to such a plight shall, in the fourteenth year from now, be deprived of husbands, sons, relatives and dear ones; and smeared all over with blood, with hair dishevelled, enter Hastinapura.’ And O Bharata,

the learned Dhaumya, holding the *kusa* grass in his hand and pointing the same towards the south-west walketh in front singing the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda* that relate to *Yama* signifying, 'When the Bharatas shall be slain in battle, the priests of the Kurus will thus sing the *Sama mantras* for the benefit of the deceased.' And the citizens in great grief are repeatedly crying, 'Alas ! Alas ! Behold our masters are going away. Fie on the Kuru elders who, from sheer covetousness, have acted like foolish children in thus banishing the heirs of Pandu. What love can we have for the wicked and avaricious Kurus ?' And when those foremost of men left Hastinapura, flashes of lightning appeared in the clear unclouded sky and the earth itself began to rock ; Rahu came to devour the Sun, although it was not the day of conjunction ; meteors began to fall ; and jackals, vultures, ravens and other carnivorous birds and beasts began to shriek aloud from the temples of the gods, the tops of sacred trees, walls and house-tops. And these awful portents, O king, were seen and heard, boding the destruction of the Bharatas, following thy evil counsels'."

DHRITHARASHTRA'S FEARS

Vaisampayana continued: "And, O monarch, while King Dhritharashtra and the wise Vidura were thus talking with each other, there appeared, in that assembly of the Kauravas and before the eyes of all, the celestial *Rishi* Narada. And he uttered these terrible words: 'In the fourteenth year from now, the Kauravas, in consequence of Duryodhana's misdeeds will all be destroyed by the might of Bhima and Arjuna.' Having said this he vanished. Then Duryodhana, Karna and Sakuni offered the kingdom to Drona regarding him as their sole refuge. And Drona, addressing all the Bharatas, said: 'The Brahmanas have said that the Pandavas of celestial origin are incapable of being slain. The sons of Dhritharashtra, however, having earnestly, and with reverence, sought my protection, it is

meet that I should look after them to the best of my power. Destiny is supreme; I cannot abandon them. Formerly, I deprived Drupada of his kingdom. Robbed of his kingdom by me, the king performed a sacrifice for obtaining a son that could slay me and had from the sacrificial fire a son named Dhrishtadyumna who hath taken the side of the Pandavas. 'Dhrishtadhyumna is the destined slayer of Drona'—that is the general belief. On thy account, O Duryodhana, that terrible time of destruction is almost come. Think not that everything hath been accomplished by sending the Pandavas into exile. This thy happiness will last but a moment, even as in winter the shadow of the top of the palm tree resteth (for a short time) at its base. Meanwhile, perform various kinds of sacrifices; enjoy, and give in charity everything thou likest. In the fourteenth year from now a great calamity will overwhelm thee.'

Vaisampayana continued: "Hearing these words of Drona, Dhritharashtra said: 'O Kshatta, the preceptor hath spoken right. Go thou and bring back the Pandavas. If they do not come back, let them depart attended with respect and affection.'

Vaisampayana said: "And while Dhritharashtra was thus restless with anxiety and sighing in grief, Sanjaya asked him, 'O lord of the earth, now that you are the monarch of the whole earth with all its wealth, and the sons of Pandu are away in exile, why is it that thou grieveest so?'

"Dhritharashtra said: 'Have they not reason to grieve, who will have to encounter in battle those bulls among warriors—the sons of Pandu—fighting with big chariots and aided by allies?'

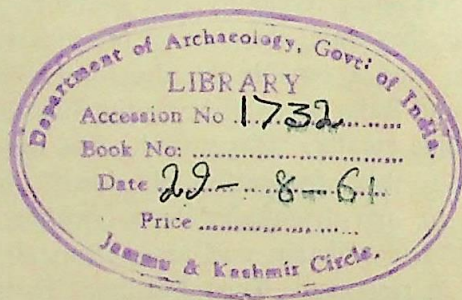
"Sanjaya said: 'This, indeed, is thy precious doing, O king!—this great hostility that is inevitable and that will assuredly bring about the total destruction of the whole world. Though forbidden by Bhishma, Drona and Vidura, thy wicked-minded and shameless son Duryodhana sent his *Suta* messenger commanding him to bring into court the beloved and virtuous wife of the Pandavas. The gods first

deprive him of his reason unto whom they send defeat and disgrace. That which is improper appeareth as proper, and that which is proper appeareth as improper unto the man about to be overwhelmed by destruction; and evil and impropriety are what he liketh. Who but Duryodhana—that false player at dice—could bring into the assembly, with insults, the daughter of Drupada, gifted with beauty and intelligence, true to every rule of morality and duty, and sprung not from any woman's womb but from the sacred fire? And, before all the assembled kings, Duryodhana and Karna spake such cruel and harsh words unto the distressed and enraged Draupadi undeserving of such treatment. O monarch, all this appeareth to me as boding fearful consequences.'

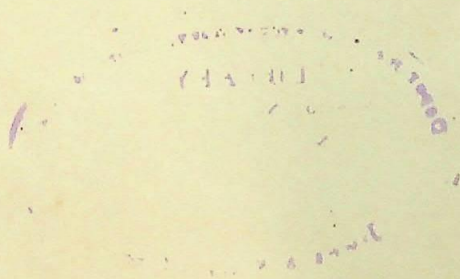
“Dhritharashtra said: ‘Sanjaya, the glances of the distressed daughter of Drupada might well consume the whole earth. Can it be that even a single son of mine will be left alive? Upon beholding the virtuous Draupadi dragged into the court, the wives of the Bharatas joining with Gandhari set up a frightful wail. Even now, along with all my subjects, they weep every day. Enraged at the ill-treatment of Draupadi, the Brahmanas in a body omitted to perform their *Agnihotra* ceremony that evening. The winds blew mightily as they do at the time of the universal dissolution, and there was a terrible thunderstorm. Meteors fell from the sky; and Rahu by swallowing the Sun unseasonably alarmed the people greatly. Our war-chariots were suddenly ablaze, and all their flag-staffs fell down boding evil; jackals began to cry frightfully from within the sacred fire chamber of Duryodhana, and asses from all directions began to bray in response. Then Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Somadatta and the high-souled Vahlika all left the assembly. It was then that, on the advice of Vidura, I consoled Draupadi and said: ‘I will grant thee boons, O Krishna, indeed, whatever thou wouldst ask?’ Of my own motion I then set free the Pandavas. Vidura then warned me, ‘Even this will prove the destruction of the Bharata race

namely, this dragging of Krishna into the court. The wrathful sons of Pandu will never forgive this insult offered unto her. Nor will the mighty bowmen of the Vrishni race and the mighty warriors amongst the Panchalas suffer this in silence. Supported by Vasudeva of unbaffled prowess Arjuna will assuredly come back surrounded by the Panchala host. And that mighty warrior Bhimasena will also come back, whirling his mace like Yama himself. Therefore, O king, not hostility but peace for ever with the sons of Pandu is what seemeth to me to be best. Without any hesitation, unite the two parties, O king ! And thou art sure to prosper.' It was thus, O son of Gavalgani, that Vidura addressed me in words of both virtue and profit. Alas, I did not accept this counsel out of partiality for my son'."

SABHA PARVA ENDS



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Maha Rao

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